

SPIRITUAL



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Celia Thaxter Hubbard

Thomas Coffey

Brother Dermot, O.C.D.

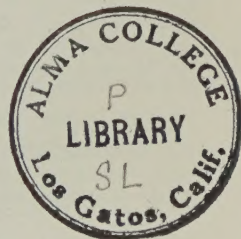
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SPIRITUAL LIFE

A Catholic Quarterly

PUBLISHED BY THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FATHERS

FATHER WILLIAM OF THE INFANT JESUS, O.C.D., Editor

VOLUME 4

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Celia Thaxter Hubbard, native Bostonian, studied painting at the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts. Baptized into the Catholic Church about six years ago while in Paris doing scenery and costume designs for the Ballet of the Marquis de Cuevas. Now engaged in the art apostolate managing the Botolph Group's Center for Religious Art in Boston.

Religious Art and the Spiritual Life

Celia Thaxter Hubbard

TRUE religious art expresses the Faith and forms the religious sentiment of the people of God. Christian art is a witness to the Faith as it is lived. A cursory glance at the sad examples of what passes for religious art today demands an examination of conscience.

Enough has been written about the dreary, sentimental, and even simpering statues and "holy pictures" which clutter the churches and homes of present-day Catholics. Even the most "conservative" have come to realize the spiritual dangers involved in what has aptly been called "religious junk." The next thing is to do something about it.

Children love heroes; and there is little of the heroic in many of these debilitated pictures of Christ, His Blessed Mother, and His saints used in teaching the Faith. These swooning characters are a far cry from heroic virtue. There are no libel courts in heaven, and perhaps that is just as well for the merchant princes who turn out these things by the thousands — for profit. Money-motivated and catering to a falling public taste, these commercial products descend to the least expensive, the least artistic, and, alas, the least truly religious.

Aside from giving children a false start, there is the incongruous

note of feeding such flabby versions of Christian truth to a generation that is called upon to make heroic efforts and sacrifices in living a full, Christlike life in a materialistic world. How many who contribute to the leakage in the Church go off into the byways because the Christ whom they envisaged in their imaginations was this pale replica of the true Christ? Where did many get the impression that "Religion is all right for women and children" if not from these effeminate, doll-like statutes, artificial flowers, and funny religious valentines?

Many of those outside the Church have been discouraged from entering even for a brief visit simply because they possessed good taste. Others who are not kindly disposed to the Faith use these sad abuses of religious art as ammunition in their assaults upon the Church. Satan himself seems to be manifest in the ugliness of the majority of objects manufactured for the decoration of churches.

Strive for Perfection

No artistic revival is possible without a spiritual deepening on the part of all the people of God. If it is true that we get the art we deserve, then these sorry travesties about us amount to a public confession of sin. This is one more reason why an intensified spiritual life is a necessity in our time. It is not and never has been a fad, a flair, an esoteric cult for a favored group. It is a crying need. When every Christian fully realizes the obligation to strive for perfection and not merely "to keep out of mortal sin" the proper spiritual climate will be at hand for the needed change in our visualization of the truths of the Faith. Every sincere Christian should pray that an intensification of the life of grace within the soul will bear fruit in this important field of the apostolate.

There are some indications already of a reflowering of a truly Christian art. A leaven does exist. In the liturgical movement, in the labor and social groups, and in the family and rural life apostolates, dedicated and prayerful people are grappling with the problems under papal direction and guidance. The close relationship between art and the liturgy assures a renaissance of the sacred arts when once the liturgy is understood in a more profound and living fashion. The trend in present theological thought to break down the departmental separation of the ascetical and mystical

lives, showing the latter to be the normal and desirable development of the former, should also lead to a more mature and well-nourished Christianity.

Reunite the Artist With the Church

The artist and the Church have long been separated — to the detriment of both. This “divorce,” wrote the late Paul Claudel in his famous letter to Alexander Cingria, “unhappily consummated in the past century between the propositions of the Faith and the powers of the imagination and sensibility which are pre-eminently the privilege of the artist,” is the cause of the present-day decadence in religious art. In this nineteenth century “crisis of an ill-natured imagination” Claudel explains that the senses “had been diverted from the supernatural world, without any effort having been made to make it accessible or desirable to them.”

Actually as early as the fourteenth century the spiritual temperature had begun to drop, with the increasing realization of the material, sensuous world, typical of Renaissance thinking. It is this Renaissance style, “deep-frozen” by the Church along with the liturgy in the sixteenth century, which has suffered such stereotype repetition up until the present time.

But the artist is indispensable to the revitalization that must undo so much of the harm under discussion. “It is he alone who is equipped to affect that marvelous transformation of spiritual truth into material symbol, to keep fresh and vital the God-given didactic of the visual.”¹ Not only in teaching, does the Church depend on the artist, but also in her public prayer. “The liturgy and the chant and Church art are all supposed to form and spiritualize man’s consciousness, to give him a tone and a maturity without which his prayer cannot normally be either very deep or very wide or very true.” Thomas Merton goes on to explain why this is true. “Art is not an end in itself. It introduces the soul into a higher spiritual order, which it expresses and in some sense explains. Music and art and poetry attune the soul to God because they induce a kind of contact with the Creator and Ruler of the universe. The genius of the artist finds its way by the affinity of

¹ Terrence R. O’Connor, S.J., “The Visual Arts and the Teaching Church,” *The Catholic Mind*, Feb., 1955, p. 78.

creative sympathy, or connaturality, into the living law that rules the universe. This law is nothing but the secret gravitation that draws all things to God as to their center. Since all true art lays bare the action of this same law in the depths of our own nature, it makes us alive to the tremendous mystery of being, in which we ourselves, together with all other living and existing things, come forth from the depths of God and return again to Him."² It is obvious that the Church has never considered art as only external trappings, frosting on the cake, window dressing, and nothing more.

Convention Versus Tradition

From the catacombs to the days of High Baroque, the Church has used what is good in every art form: Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque, placing upon each the impress of Christ. For more than a century, however, convention has replaced tradition and the artist has been lost to the Church. "Tradition is creative. Always original, it opens out new horizons for an old journey. Convention, on the other hand, is completely unoriginal. It is slavish imitation. It is closed in upon itself and leads to complete sterility."³

This confusion of tradition with convention is the key to the trouble. The jaded, tired convention that has been held up as the norm and confused with "the mind of the Church" has brought this time of troubles upon the contemporary scene. Art, liberating itself from the deathlike grip of academism, has maintained its vital traditions in the generations which have followed the Great Divide. The Church has nothing to fear in turning from a worn and dreary convention into a stream of living artistic tradition. Her own theological tradition is her bulwark. The true artist appreciates the meaning of discipline. Once the artist is chosen and the subject matter given, the Church should trust the artist, helping and encouraging him but leaving him completely free in the exercise of his art. The reunion, however, is not without its difficulties. The Church needs the arts and the artist needs the Church. Indifference,

² Thomas Merton, *No Man Is an Island* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1955), p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

ignorance, and fear in both camps are the great obstacles, but they are not insurmountable.

Apathy on the part of the faithful and clergy, and indifference to Christian themes on the part of the artists who feel they and their works are unwanted and misunderstood, are the first problems to be faced. When a prayerful Catholic people turns away from visual sentimentalities, and when the artist turns to things of God for inspiration, the change for the better will be well advanced. This calls for patience, sincerity, and education.

Fear may be a strong word, but it fits the matter under discussion. All too many Catholics shy away from what is contemporary, confusing "modernity" with modern. There is the prevalent assumption that today, for the first time in history, the artist is unable to give religious expression in the artistic idiom of his own time. Modern idioms, properly understood, are not blasphemous, grotesque, sacrilegious, or anything of the kind. Much modern art, in fact, contains the very qualities of symbolism and timelessness that the Church needs and could use. Every living tradition has its inept imitators; this is a sad form of flattery and much that passes for modern is lunatic-fringed sensationalism. This "school" is not being considered here. The vital artist of any period would not be copying old art forms. If he did so, he would not be an artist. The artist today is working in a living tradition, is working in a contemporary idiom. It is a question of understanding him and his work — not of throwing rocks and taking to the hills in panic.

Art Not Mere Self-Expression

Christian artists are faced with great difficulties. They must not only re-accustom the faithful to beauty, but they must also re-accustom modern art to God. The artist, being very much a man of his time, produces art that is the inevitable expression of the intellectual and spiritual attitude of the period in which he lives. He too suffers from the spiritual poverty of the age. That many modern artists have made self-expression their sole aim is but the visual parallel of current idealistic philosophies. The efforts of these moderns to render moods, expressions, feeling, and emotion, unanchored in any fixed philosophy of life, become morbid and subjective. The reaction to this work of those who try to understand

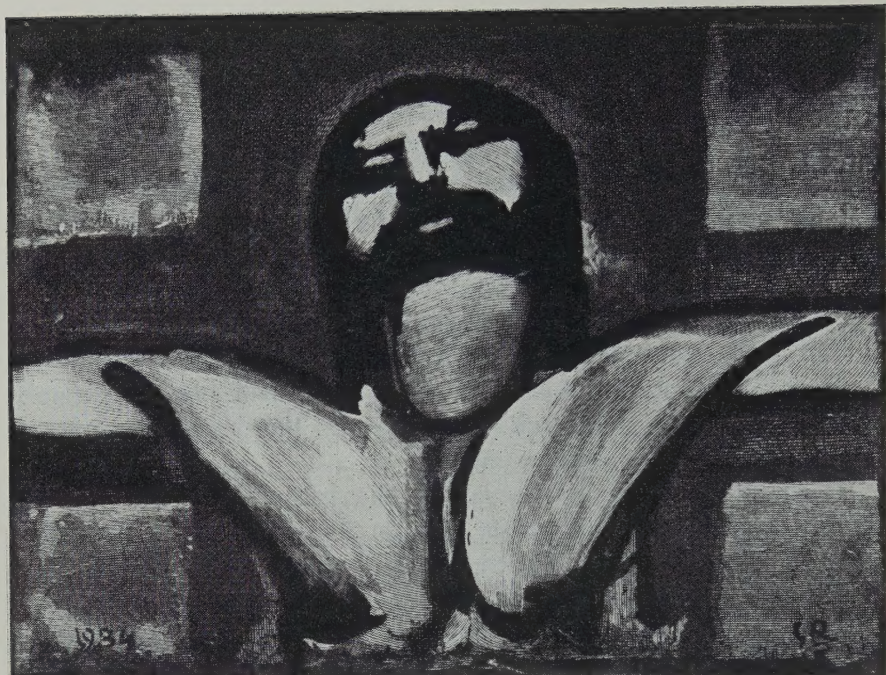
it is bewilderment and often irritation. Such art lacks the universality that permits the communication necessary for a truly Christian art.

The artist needs the Church. Impoverished by the retreat of the Church into conventions, the artist is in danger of wrecking his own living traditions which need the rock of Peter if he is to build well. The artist, like the mystic, penetrates beyond the sensible surface of things into their inmost reality. The intuition of the artist sets in motion the very same psychological processes which accompany infused contemplation. In much present-day art, however, the intuitions of the sense, mind, and heart are rarely in harmony and the results tend toward sentimentality, photographic banality, and abstraction.

Christian art must be the art of the Incarnation: the art of a flesh penetrated by the spirit even in its most sensible qualities. It must give form to the spiritual in the sensible and by the sensible. Modern man, however, formed by an industrial civilization, is too dehumanized to have art readily become his Christian language. "Thus the problem of modern Christian art is much more profound than that of the harmony or conflict of recent plastic forms with Christian themes and the needs of the faithful. This problem concerns the soul of modern man, even in that subconscious part where the creative genius is nurtured and whence it emerges. To solve this difficulty, it is necessary that modern man become a "new man through Christ."⁴ The artist will then produce in his own spiritual life a synthesis between the aspirations of renewed Christianity and the most vital tendencies of art.

When God and the things of God are inspiration for the creative artist, the Church prospers and the truths of the Faith take on a visual splendor which is their proper setting. This has been the history of religious art whenever the artist and the Church were together within the tradition which is the Spirit of God at work in the world. It is time for the Church to turn from convention and for the artist to move his tradition from a foundation of sand to that of rock. Our task is to hasten that reunion by prayer, intelligence, and good will.

⁴ Pie R. Regamey, O.P., "Modern Man and the Religious Arts," *Towards a Living Tradition* (St. Louis, Mo.: Pio Decimo Press, 1953), p. 75.



Georges Rouault

Form, color, harmony
Oasis or mirage
For the eyes, the heart, and the spirit
Toward the moving ocean of pictorial appeal

"Tomorrow will be beautiful," said the shipwrecked man
Before he disappeared beneath the sullen horizon

Peace seems never to reign
Over this anguished world
Of shams and shadows

Jesus on the cross will tell you better than I,
Jeanne in her brief and sublime replies at her trial
As well as other saints and martyrs
Obscure or consecrated.

Georges Rouault

Thomas Coffey is a religious-book editor for the Macmillan Company, an instructor in Philosophy at Fordham University, and a regular contributor to magazines and newspapers.

A New Light in Catholic Letters

Thomas Coffey

AMERICA'S most recently discovered poetic figure is a 37-year-old Catholic priest, a Jesuit, Rev. Daniel Berrigan, who is a scholar in medieval studies at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, N. Y. Author of *Time Without Number*, the Lamont Poetry Society Selection for 1957, Father Berrigan has, until now, virtually escaped the attention of the non-Catholic reading world. But, with the publication of his book by Macmillan on October 8 and the acclaim attached to recognition of his work by the Academy of American Poets, he has been quickly catapulted into prominence on the wider literary scene. "Magic," "notable achievement," "a contemporary poetic event" are some of the terms with which reviewers and critics of the secular magazines have welcomed publication of Daniel Berrigan's book. And the poet himself has been garlanded with praise for his masterful handling of poetic technique, for his use of language adjudged "immediately right and adequate," and for the dramatic intensity and arrangement of his work. Compared to W. H. Auden, to Gerard Manley Hopkins, and to Dylan Thomas, Father Berrigan has created a stir which, as far as the secular world goes, surpasses that made by any recent Catholic poet in this country. This is especially significant, since *Time Without Number* is a volume of religious poetry — of all kinds the most beset with bathos and rhetoric. It is exciting indeed to note how the perception of Father Berrigan comes through with a clarity and moving power in his logic of images, in his expert, economic design of language.

There is, however, much more than integrity of craftsmanship and of language in the poetry of this newcomer to the literary world. One finds also a careful and articulate humanism of the Incarnation. There is a reverence for life as an irrepeatable and irreplaceable gift, and the nervous presence of felt theological fact. Fully to understand this aspect of Daniel Berrigan's poetry, it is necessary to examine the sources of his original and strikingly personal poetic method, as well as the point of view which he has adopted toward "the real."

When Daniel Berrigan first began serious study of poetry at St. Andrew-on-the-Hudson in 1941, he concentrated on the work of Auden, Frost, Marianne Moore, and William Butler Yeats. In W. H. Auden, the marvelously dexterous sleight-of-hand man, he found, in first readings, only a stunning glimpse of pyrotechnics; but he gradually came to appreciate, in subsequent examination of the same poems, the exact and merciless surgeon who heals by opening wounds. Frost's short nature lyrics were seen to be trim and haloed and biologically so unexplainable that even the intervening years have found no better description than "pure gift." And the extended narratives of the same poet, once they were perceived to be as dark and painful as anything of the more purified O'Neill, revealed to him, in all its nakedness, the anguish that most people try simply to shrug off or live with. Marianne Moore was the strange lady who refused to sit quietly in her portrait but who regarded her world as contemplatively and as religiously as a Renaissance lady on a wall. What she had seen and what she had loved! — here was technique raised to the angelic. In a single lyric, by dwelling on creation — its strangeness, its utter singularity, its uncopyable beauty of things that go their own way and grow merely into what they are — Miss Moore seemed to say more than entire volumes or even many sermons heard from the pulpit. Yeats, for the younger Berrigan, was the language of the people raised to the highest degree. And in the works of this poet, he discovered how politics, furious loyalties and hatreds, and values of civilization could all be reported and, "like the force of a truncheon blow on meanness," compel men to see again where they had grown stupid and heavy and had betrayed the better part of what is in themselves. Here he learned how the inner

resources of imagination, of insight, of conviction — provided they be as fierce as life itself — can be utilized by the poet, like a public man, to serve the method and material of poetry.

Besides attending to these four greats, Daniel Berrigan, as a Jesuit seminarian, was also an early victim of the Hopkins bug. He read and he memorized Hopkins by the hour, as well as a hundred other lesser poets. And he carefully examined the whole litany of names that made up English literary history. Rhythms got into his inner ear, reverberations stayed with him for weeks, phrases from poets began cropping up in assignments and in personal letters to his family at home. Out of all this reading and study — combined with his artistic sense of the immanent presence of great literature in things — Daniel Berrigan, himself an independent poet now, came to stand in no one's shadow but to give to poetry "a local habitation," as Sister M. Madeleva has perceived, "in a language which is quite his own." This personal form of poetry was severely weighted; it had something to say, it asserted a point of view, and it had its own way of doing so. It is most significantly demonstrated in:

THE POET TO HIMSELF

Color it not kind
with skies of love and amber:
make it plain with death
and bitter as remember.

You who set easel
to sigh by willows —
your lie will lie
tomorrow with mildews.

But yours is no shutterblink
transfer of view:
your paint be blood
your canvas, you.

This new method became the vehicle of a steadily maturing Christian humanism. In the study of philosophy and theology, and in personal meditation, the young poet came to see clearly that one can be true to the divine only by being true to the human. Man must speak not with the tongues of angels but with the tongues of men. Surer of his poetic techniques, Daniel Berrigan

was becoming increasingly aware of the full and deeper meaning of the authentic Catholic approach to the real world. He would not rely on some automatic response which a religious subject can set up in oneself, and thus be unable to undergo the passage to a personal hold upon it. He must actually live within it. Applied to poetic method, this meant for him a dramatic theory that said, in every case, that this moment, this experience, this order, has been grasped: it is a reflection of the universal harmony. "Too tame" came to be his commentary on most of the religious poetry popularly accepted — poetry that was really an affront to the word "religious" since it revealed an inability to recognize that there was imitation of someone else's reaction to a subject, or even worse, imitation of oneself. For whenever anything is humanly incompetent, it is unable in any genuine sense to encompass mystery or even to supply a way to its outer reaches.

One of the most impressive poems in *Time Without Number* is "The Coat." It perfectly exemplifies this humanism of the Incarnation:

THE COAT

This is the coat His bowed mother fitted
at hearthlight weeping fondly. In three seasons —
summer was her angel, fall bent her boughs
a crone winter mothered her maidenhood —
she stitched Him in and out by the nodding fire;
O Heartbeat soft as snow on high snow falling,
vein as the veined grape delicate, in and out
my body's shuttle closes you in white linen.

This is the coat my mother's love went buying
to warm me, naked and shivering no one
she heard all night peeking her heart for shelter.
This skin she buttoned to my chin, these eyes
she kissed to light, and gave me over
to the white stinging hand of twelvemonth winter.

It wears me well. She in cunning stole me
from the bolt Christ, won my pattern
wheeling and whispering with Mary at a churchdoor.
I am more kin of Him than hers
who cut and seamed me till her body bled.

O see Him live in me, not I:
I put him on and strut my coat-of-pie.

During the years of seminary training, the reading and writing of "new poetry" was like launching a boat and landing on some distant planet. But Daniel Berrigan pursued his personal course. The singular and the imaginative, as well as concern for the "human" came to possess his thinking, and gradually expressed themselves in a new, effective, and startlingly distinctive verse.

Ordination, study at Paray-le-Monial in France, and active work in the missionary and teaching apostolate of the Catholic priesthood helped to bring to fruition the seeds of literary and humanistic concern first sown in the seminary years. The taxing, but profoundly important theoretical and practical problems of education at Brooklyn Preparatory School gave him a deeper understanding of the ways in which the traditional Christian image of man must be applied to new situations. And the will to communicate and to protect life was perceived by him as the essential task of the real teacher, rather than the mere theorist. "For a fully formed human being will not," he once wrote, "go to work without producing something or someone in his own image. And one cannot doubt that most of the wars of life are won, and the heroes of them formed, under a good teacher." Love for his work, competence, and indifference to material gain came to be the marks of his Christian humanism as a teacher; and a sense of sacredness, devotion, and gift of self involved him, as a person, at that vertiginous point where life takes both its coloring and its attitudes and looks frighteningly beyond time.

Humanism for the Catholic teacher implies, of course, a larger universe in which to move and one to which students must be introduced. That is the world of faith, of grace, and of divine love. But these three must all be incarnate. And therefore the Catholic teacher is not excused from introducing his classes to the world of creation. "This," says Father Berrigan, "actually deepens the responsibility. For the world of grace, as far as men are concerned, is active in bodies as well as in souls. It is active in men. And in the light of the Incarnation, with its newness of acceptance of the world on the part of the creator it seems to be a special sort of betrayal to attempt to separate what God has joined."

It is not only Daniel Berrigan's work as teacher that has been characterized by a progressive and vitally Christian understanding

of our times. He has also been vigorously active as a priest in missionary and parish work, in radio preaching, and as a leader in the Young Catholic Worker Movement. Is writing poetry compatible with his work as a priest? Does piety permit the concentration and expenditure of mental energy necessary for the increasingly specialized literary medium of poetry. Here again, Daniel Berrigan's humanism brings the essential factors, human and spiritual, into careful consideration. "I cannot quite understand," he says, "how any really human gift can be outside the wider spectrum of the supernatural."

With the priestly responsibilities since ordination, he has had to do most of his writing toward midnight, when even the rigors of the *Spiritual Exercises* will permit concentration on poetry without scruple. "And I've had the fondness," he explains somewhat shyly, "to presume that the discipline involved in setting down a certain ordered structure of thought and image has made me more human and given a kind of resonance to the almost universal plea of teachers in these days—that man allow himself to survive in spite of the hidden persuaders and the images on the tube in the cave."

The distinction and intensity of Daniel Berrigan's poetry is paralleled by an equally significant concern with the realization of practical results in the full human life. "Whatever is noble, whatever good" is the Pauline heart of the humanism of this priest-poet, who thinks deeply on the meaning of Christ for our times. It is not only an eloquent voice that has been added to the literary scent; it is one that is also theologically articulate and philosophically precise.

A richer and more objective spirituality is inevitable once you make primary the contemplation of divine Beauty and Truth. Brother Dermot of St. Joseph's Seminary, Peterborough, New Hampshire, has unusual insight into this matter.

Beauty and Truth

Brother Dermot, O.C.D.

“LET us rejoice, Beloved, and let us go to see ourselves in Thy beauty.”

We, all of us, are fascinated by beauty. However, without the removal of the blunt edges of perception through purification we remain dull and unaware of the beauty that is within us and around us. The beauty of almighty God is not altogether removed from us. We catch faint suggestions of it in the tranquil magnificence of the universe and perceive slight traces of it in the tiny acorn. Love of beauty, therefore, should be encouraged, not denied, for love of beauty fosters love of law and order and makes goodness itself more appealing.

Our Spiritual Leader, Pope Pius XII, has said: “In every truth the created world is the manifestation of the wisdom and goodness of God, for all things have received their existence from Him and reflect His grandeur. Each of them is, as it were, one of His works, and bears the mark of what we might call the fundamental alphabet, namely, those natural and universal laws and harmonies derived from yet higher laws and harmonies which the labor of thought strives to discover in all their amplitude and absolute character.”¹

The Holy Father amplifies this quotation by indicating to us that created things are words of truth, that in themselves, in their being, there is neither contradiction nor confusion. On the con-

¹ Pius XII, Address to the Academy of Science and Philosophy,

trary, they always cohere one with the other. Allowance is made for difficulties in understanding creatures wholly because of their depth, but, we say "when clearly known, they are seen to be in conformity with the superior exigencies of reason."¹

According to the Holy Father, "man as part of this created universe is a synthesis. He is a creature, but is possessed of a spirit which is capable of comprehending truths from a coherent and unified point of view. He demands that a breath of living unity enliven the acquired knowledge. It is in this way that science becomes fruitful, and culture begets an organic doctrine."

But not all of us are scientists or philosophers. The average person stands facing the wide, wide world. He observes before him the beauty of nature in all her glory. Yet within himself he perceives the quest for truth and for God. Then he awakens to the realization that nature provides merely the background for his longings, not only in the echelons of present-day science and (perennial) philosophy, but also in the realm of love.

The saints, in their own way which is akin to ours, have struck a sane balance between science on one hand and beauty and truth on the other. The saints have gone to nature and to God in His revealed word and in the teachings of His Church for their inspiration. St. John of the Cross is an example of a saint who was dedicated to the life of prayer and the life of active works within the Church. In his *Spiritual Canticle* he reflects the movements of the soul in its quest for God in nature and in itself. He speaks of the Spouse and of God as the Beloved. St. John tells us that seeking God in nature, commendable though it be, is but a means toward an end, not the end itself. God has called us to Himself. We cannot attain unto Him outside of Christ. It is in participation of the life of Christ either as souls who suffer or as souls who minister to others in His name that we partake of the beauty of the vision of God and become really sons of God. "He by essence, being the Son by nature; and we by participation, being sons by adoption."² "This is the adoption of the sons of God, who will truly say to God that which the Son Himself said through St. John to the Eternal Father: 'All my things are Thine, and Thy things are Mine.'"²

² *Spiritual Canticle*, 36.5, Peers:

How are we to attain to such a sublime state? By exercise of the virtues in co-ordination with the holy will of God in terms of increasing perfection and humble love and service. St. John of the Cross continues in his *Spiritual Cantic* with this significant quotation: "Let us so act that by means of the exercise of this humble love we may even come to see ourselves in Thy beauty in life eternal — that is, that I may be so transformed in Thy beauty that, being alike in beauty, we both may see ourselves in Thy beauty."²

Speaking metaphorically, St. John compares Christ with man. Christ, the Divine Word, who because of His spiritual height is understood to be the mountain calling man to a knowledge of the Son of God according to Isaias: "Come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord."² These words are directed to "the hill" — that is, to the evening knowledge of God which is the wisdom of God in His creatures and wondrous ordinances.

The soul of man hopes to attain to both the mountains and the hills. The climax of love of God is to be reached after full exercise of those virtues of which God Himself is the direct object and of those wherein He is served indirectly. All the while the soul is held fast by love and is constantly sharpening the instruments of her quest — her faculties — to enjoy in ever increasing measure peace, harmony, and happiness — along with tribulations. This is the path of beauty that leads to God.

Many men have stumbled unto a path of beauty. Countless souls have drawn beauty to themselves and have been warped and crushed by it. Frequently, the absorption in beauty has resulted from the satisfaction of a job well done, a painting perfectly executed, or a perception of truth newly acquired. Failure to realize the inseparable relationship between truth and beauty often has been the first step backward on the road toward perfection. The burden of beauty is not found merely in the glistening harmony of component parts, but in the loving acceptance of truth implied or involved.

This contemplation of truth and goodness in turn imposes responsibility. How far have we advanced within ourselves in the virtues of truth, goodness, and inevitably, beauty? Consideration of this question is of paramount importance. Proper alignment with truth

opens the heart and the mind to an even clearer perception of the truth of God and the beauty of His Word, Jesus Christ, who said: "I am the Truth, the Life, and the Way."

Another famous quotation with which we all are familiar is "The truth will make you free." Herein lies the tragedy of the artist or any man who seeks truth unaided by prayer, for it is prayer that brings about moral reform. St. Teresa tells us that sin and persevering prayer are incompatible. The soul in its enormous appetite for beauty and truth, aye, even in its longing for goodness, must stave off selfish aims in itself or it will falter and turn back. This is the sad commentary on the life of Paul Verlaine, a mad lover of beauty.

Furthermore, the soul may be scorched by the heat of the beauty or holiness it has achieved. The implication is that the soul must be able to protect itself in the welter of creatures by prayer and proper moral virtue. Its real bastion, however, is faith that the God who sought it out in its weakness will never send it away in its happy return to Him.

Tremendous strides toward the right attitude regarding truth and beauty may be made through meditation. There, the soul seeks to meet God in solitude and silence and strives to detach itself from created things. Despite the charge that meditation is a rather limited approach, the great St. Teresa tells us that it is a good method to follow at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the spiritual life. (St. Teresa belonged to the Carmelite Order whose aim it is to meditate day and night on the Love of the Lord.) But meditating is not the ultimate in the spiritual realm. The thinker must become the lover, the contemplative.

Even then his efforts do not end with the cloister. As St. John of the Cross has so beautifully written, there is the life of active work within the Church to be considered. This life, too, can lead to God. The works of nature provide a steppingstone to the door, the life of Christ.

St. John also speaks of the entrance into the thicket of the marvelous works and profound judgments of God, the vast multitude thereof which is so great and of such variety. "Therein is wisdom, abundant and so full of mysteries that it can be called not only thick, but even curdled as David says in these words:

'*Mons Dei, mons pinguis, mons coagulatus*,' which is to say: 'the mountain of God is a mountain thicket and a mountain curdled. And this thicket of wisdom and knowledge of God is so profound and vast that for all that the soul may know thereof, she can ever enter farther still.'"

Fortunately the soul in its movement among creatures is charmed by God on every side. This attraction catches and directs the eye of the soul which is its intention. If that be light, how great is the Light? If we face the sun, we cannot but reflect a shadow. If we are free interiorly, the light of eternal brightness, the truth, must shine through us as a kindly light before others in word and work.

Another outstanding, inseparable truth propounded by the mystical doctor is that suffering is a form of contemplation. St. John is the only saint to identify suffering with contemplation!

"If then the light and love we face has the very real hue of suffering we cannot but embrace its providential presence. Faith tells us also that suffering enhances the opportunities of other souls as an indirect consequence, and it frees us for further love of God."³

St. John continues with "Oh, that it might be perfectly understood how the soul cannot attain to the thicket of the wisdom and the riches of God which are of so many kinds except by retiring into the thicket of many kinds of suffering and by setting thereon its condition and desire."⁴ "The soul that of a truth desires Divine wisdom first desires suffering that it may enter therein — yea, into the thicket of the Cross."⁴

The soul then has all around it the mysterious manifestations of God's goodness, His wisdom, and His inscrutable judgments. Reverence for God in His presence everywhere and joyous, virile acceptance of the mystery of suffering sharpen the tools of the soul in its quest.

If the soul is not occupied with God directly by faith and good works it should be concerned with the right love of itself and love of God's creatures. St. Teresa says that the result of our quest for God is works — "works for God and for souls!"⁵ "Deeds and good

³ T. U. Moore, *Prayer*.

⁴ *Spiritual Canticle*, XXXVI, p. 38, Peers, No. 12.

⁵ *Way of Perfection* — concluding sentence,

works," we are told, "wants the Lord."⁶ The quest is the quest of the life of continual exercise of faith, hope, and charity. It is the real search for the Holy Grail.

"Let us rejoice, Beloved, in the communication of the sweetness of love, not only in that which we already have in the habitual joining together and union of us both, but in that which overflows in the exercise of effective and actual love, whether interiorly with the will in the act of affection, or exteriorly, in the performance of works belonging to the service of the Beloved."⁷

In the pouring forth of the souls of the saints, in their absorption with truth, goodness, and beauty, in their love of God and their fellow men, the words of the prophet Isaias seem to strike just the right chord:

When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry
And shalt satisfy the afflicted soul,
Then shall thy light rise up in the darkness,
And thy darkness shall be as the noon day.

And the Lord will give thee rest continually
And will fill thy soul with brightness and deliver thy bones.
And thou shalt be like a watered garden
And like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail.

And the places that have been desolate for ages
Shall be built up in thee.

Thou shalt raise up the foundations of generation and generation:

And thou shalt be called the repairer of fences, turning the paths into rest.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath from doing thy own will in my holy day

And call the sabbath delightful and thy holy of the Lord glorious and glorify Him.
While thou dost not thy own ways, and thy own will is not found to speak a word
Then shalt thou be lifted up above high places and I am delighted.

⁶ *The Mansions*, V, Chap. III, p. 120.

⁷ *Spiritual Canticle*, XXXVI, p. 38, Peers, No. 12.

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Poetic Intuition and Contemplation

Sister Mary Julian, R.S.M.

THERE is much indefinite talk about poetry and contemplation. The meaning of the terms shifts even in one piece of writing sometimes, so that the author himself does not seem to make the proper distinctions.

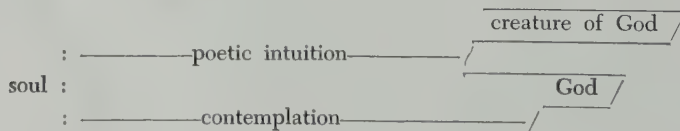
Poetic intuition, properly so called, and contemplation as such are rooted in the soul. They are not one, but two. Poetic intuition is a natural reaching out to beauty in a suprarational way, meaning that it is not conceptual but connatural, not reasoned to but reached toward. *Suprarational* does not mean *irrational*. In poetic intuition there is a preliminary working of the intellect. But the actual working of the poetic intuition does not depend on reason solely. This intuition can be appreciative, enjoying a creation; or itself creative, making something to appeal to others. Either way, it is satisfied in itself, without going any further. The artist may wish to share his production with others, or the enjoyer of the art to show it to friends, but that is aside from the fundamental satisfaction of the act of creation or the act of enjoyment. I hear music; I enjoy it; I am satisfied. I paint a picture; I enjoy the act of creation and the end product; I am satisfied. Neither of these experiences brings me to God, the highest Good, directly. In fact, if the work is seductive, morally reprehensible (a suggestive musical comedy, a lewd picture, a blasphemous poem) it may take me away from God. If the experience is good or even morally indifferent, I may be led to praise God for it, to see in it a mirror of His

perfections, to long, because of it, for the perfect satisfaction of His beauty. But it does not, of itself, sanctify.

Contemplation, working psychologically the same way as the poetic intuition, is *not* the same. It is rooted in the soul too, and reaches out for knowledge in the sense that knowledge not only knows but possesses, in the sense that the gift of Wisdom lets you "taste and see that the Lord is sweet." The object of this desire is God, pure and simple, and it is never completely satisfied in this life because the soul cannot be perfectly united to God except in heaven. Unlike the poetic intuition, this desire is impelled by a supernatural power, grace. In active contemplation, we, aided by grace, can work for this experience of God. In passive or infused contemplation, the soul can do nothing but leave itself open to the action of the Holy Spirit. Self-activity is not only useless but dangerous, for if the human action continues, the divine cannot work.

Is Poetry Dangerous?

In this final stage of contemplation, Thomas Merton states that the action of the poetic intuition is a danger, since it may impede the acquisition of perfect quiet needed in the soul for the operation of the Holy Spirit. This seems to be only a remote possibility, since the two, poetic intuition and contemplation, are fundamentally separate. The greatest of all mystics to write of their experience of God was St. John of the Cross, whose best poetry was written after he had reached heights of contemplation. He was, at one time, an outstanding poet and a saint. Dante also did his greatest work when he had attained considerable holiness. And Fra Angelico, a very holy monk, painted masterpieces. The fact that their subjects were heavenly proves nothing except that their thoughts were absorbed in God and naturally their work turned in that direction. In them, as in all others, poetic intuition and contemplation worked separately, never merging in this life.



Has the poetic intuition, then, no influence on contemplation? Because man's soul is a unit, it would be impossible to say that there is *no* relationship between poetic intuition and contemplation. Although they never merge, the artistic sense can be of help to the soul in contemplation, and it can be a hindrance. It can be a help by attuning the soul to higher things, making it aware of beauty, drawing it out of its selfish, mundane life to a higher good than bread and butter, than money and comfort and smug security. It can be a hindrance if the artist lets his artistic satisfaction be an end to life itself, so that he will not satisfy the contemplative longing for God.

It is because of the first possibility of poetry and art and music that the Church uses them in her services. They can help the soul to pray. When life was better integrated, in the Middle Ages for example, art was the handmaid of the Church; the two worked together closely. That is no longer true. Art is secularized and does not often meet religion except in passing. Church art is often tasteless if not downright vulgar. Merton points this out, looking at modern art. Francis Thompson pointed it out, looking at modern poetry. St. Pius X pointed it out, listening to church music. A return to the old relationship would no doubt help much to improve the contemplative spirit in the Church.

It is because of the second possibility — that poetic intuition might become the be-all and end-all of life — that it may hinder contemplation. Artists who are not detached from their art risk losing perspective, and making the enjoyment or creative aspect of their art take the place of the higher good sought in contemplation. This danger accounts for the advice of religious guides of souls beginning the spiritual life to a curtailment and sometimes a complete sacrifice of artistic activity. They are, in this, only following Christ's command: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. . . ." Often when the first stage of the spiritual life is over, the artist can resume his art, chastened by abstinence, and find a new vigor in his work. We think here first, most likely, of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Only because he wrote "The Habit of Perfection," and lived it, could he later write "The Windhover," "God's Grandeur," and "The Golden Echo." The last mentioned poem contains the key to the mystery of the contemplative's art;

"Give beauty back to God." Even his so-called terrible sonnets – and *terrible* they are – give glory to God in their submission to His will and in their superb artistry. On the other hand, many who have not practiced this control of the poetic intuition, have not only lost contemplation, but have lost the complete development of their artistic powers, have even let them deteriorate and themselves with them. A quick look at such a limited section of artists as modern American poets shows an appalling number of suicides and mental cases, as well as alcoholics and drug addicts and perverts.

Confusion of Art

Is the modern poet any worse in this than the poet of other times? Evidence says that he is. When Matthew Arnold saw life as a confused plain where ignorant armies clashed by night, he was seeing only the beginning of the modern flight from God. After him, the deluge. The wasteland of which the early Eliot wrote was not a figment of his imagination but a definite reality. It was the world in which he lived. That it might become for him, in time, a garden with the voices of children and a place of hope and affirmation is a sign of his sincerity and of the grace given his search for a way out of the wasteland. Other poets were not so fortunate – or not so sincere. Thomas Merton says that he sees "some of the best poets of our times . . . running wild among the tombs in the moonlit cemeteries of surrealism."

This is not because they enjoy the experience. Modern culture has become so completely divorced from God that only the unusual poet has light enough to know the end of poetry and its place in life. For many it becomes self-expression with no other end than expression, whether the expression be true or not, or the enjoyment resulting from it be moral or not. For others, art is a vehicle of political ideas, a means of social redress. Still others use it to cater to the vitiated tastes of an amoral world. Any musician, painter, or poet who aims to live by his art is almost forced to follow the crowd in this matter and "give the public what it wants."

That such a group of artists should be molders of a new order, as Maritain hopes, seems impossible. Only a poet of Eliot's stature could dare to preach as he has preached and hope to be heard. And even

he, since his "Ash Wednesday," "Four Quartets," and "The Cocktail Party," has lost prestige and followers. Rouault's painting will never be popular. Only genuine seekers of the truth would be able to write like Eliot, paint like Rouault. And each of these, significantly, goes to Christianity for his inspiration. There is in the modern world nothing else that makes sense. Men who seek, apart from it, their inspiration, produce sound and splash paint and write words, but it is not true art, not genuine. Having wrought at being true artists, honestly, they will feel the failure of even their successes, and will seek comfort from this frustration. To some other creature they will say, "Let us be true to one another." If that other creature fails them also, they often, with Hart Crane, leap into the ocean to drown. No matter how expertly they have mastered their technique, what they are trying to say is often definitely false, sometimes vaguely neutral, at best veiled truth. Robinson Jeffers' style is unique and beautiful, but what he has to say is blasphemous more often than not. Hilda Doolittle, writing her flawless images, may mean a Christian God when she writes of the "Maker of Cities," but it might well be just an old Greek deity and no more. Robert Frost's truth is merely a natural understanding, and not too strongly stated. Eliot's close approach to the heart of Christian truth is so obscurely stated that only the initiate can read it with full comprehension.

For the rest — the run-of-the-mill poets — opinions differ with critics. Once the old canons of art are overthrown, it's every man for himself, it would appear. There are fashions in art, and the ruling clique calls its own choice excellent. Some say we are due for a swing back to the conventional in all arts. If that is true, as it may be, will the conventional rules bring a more profound thought, a deeper truth? The two do not necessarily go together, although the greatest art expresses the greatest truth as well as the greatest beauty. It is difficult to imagine a revival of form without a revival of belief. Archibald MacLeish writes meaningfully — more profoundly than he usually writes, but this was in 1926:

The Virgin of Chartres whose bleaching bones still wear
 The sapphires of her glory knew a word —
 That now is three round letters like the three
 Round empty staring punctures in a skull.

. . . Now there are no words
 Nor names to name them and they will not speak
 But grope against his groping touch and throw
 The long unmeaning shadows of themselves
 Across his shadow and resist his sense.

Place against that, Eliot's words in "Ash Wednesday":

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
 If the unheard, unspoken
 Word is unspoken, unheard;
 Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
 The Word without a word, the Word within
 The world and for the world;
 And the light shone in darkness and
 Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
 About the centre of the silent Word.

Where shall the word be found, where will the word
 Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence
 Not on the sea or on the islands, not
 On the mainland, in the desert or the rainland,
 For those who walk in darkness
 The right time and the right place are not there
 No place of grace for those who avoid the face
 No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and deny the voice. . . .¹

That is why it seems more important to listen for the voice, letting art take care of itself. If children learn to listen for the voice of God, they will, if need be, fashion their own art. At least, in this culture-without-culture, they are safer without what is called "art," perhaps. Genius will find its own technique without specific training. For the rest, it is enough that they hear. The line to contemplation is open to them, and they need no more.

¹ Quotation from MacLeish is from his "Einstein," p. 849, *Modern American Poets*, Sanders-Macmillan. That from Eliot is in the same book, p. 793.

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Art in the Christian Home

Mrs. Alfred Berger

WHEN the Gospel reached the ears of women in Galilee, Antioch, or Rome there was a magnificent response. You might have thought a herald had summoned them to action and set their tongues to repeating the news. Here was an event which was worth talking about. Here was a dream come true, a dream which had existed only in promise since the ingratitude of Eve. The hungry hope of pardon would now be satisfied.

From the foundations of the world, Paul the Apostle had written the Romans, the knowledge of God had been made clear to men's minds. "Men have caught sight of His invisible nature, His eternal power and His divineness" by looking at His creatures and the beauty of material creation.

But somehow at the time of Christ's coming although men had been given "this knowledge of God, they did not honor Him or give thanks to Him as God." On all sides there was a false response in both dishonor and idolatry. Things were no longer related to their Source. Twisted and warped in mind and body these "fools," as St. Paul calls them, "exchanged the glory of the imperishable God for representations of perishable man, of bird and beast and reptile." Pagan art fawned at the altar of materialism and soon reflected the futility and pettiness of its god.

"Men exchanged God's truth for a lie reverencing and worshipping the creature in preference to the Creator." In return "God

abandoned them to passions which brought dishonour to themselves."¹ Women were especially stricken by this abandonment by God. She was more sensitive to the loneliness of this empty worship. She sensed that she could be no better than the thing she adored. The beauty of nature, the simplicity of her children, the very works of her hands no longer drew her up to God but dragged down the dignity of her being below the level of her idol.

Suddenly news of redemption reached her. Most women of the first Christian conversions heard of "the Christ" from the lips of dispersed Apostles in the galleries for women at the north end of Jewish synagogues. Many were Gentiles, attracted by the simple rule of justice in Judaism. They were weary of their paganism with its cults of death and darkness. Sometimes word of the Messias reached them secondhand from the conversation of their menfolk.

However it came, they welcomed the new revelation. They believed and stood by their convictions through persecution and martyrdom. They responded with heart and with hands. Where did they get the strength and the spirit to pass on the message in the face of death? Where did they suddenly learn to evaluate things as paths to the spiritual? How did they discover ways to use the raw materials of creation to fashion beauty which would evoke reverence, and confidence and above all Christian optimism?

These questions and others like them might well be asked by women of today who stand in a world very much like that of Petronella and Prisca. The wedding of matter and spirit has again been divorced. The former has been set up for our adoration while the latter is ignored in the "best" of circles. As a result woman has again degraded herself and cut her dignity to fit the thing she worships. Instead of redeeming her world as Christ did His, she is immobile, apathetic. Her heart is not moved. Her hands are idle. She is alone. Perhaps Perpetua and Felicitas of other days can tell us what was the source of their spirit and the inspiration of their art.

In many ways these early Christian women had wonderful advantages, the most wonderful was their intense and active share in the simple worship of their communities. They had their own

¹ Rom. 1:18-29.

altars and their own Sacrifice, and each member of the community had a role to act. As in the synagogues in a group they listened to the Word of God, the reading of the Word was translated to their own tongue because ancient Hebrew was not understood by them. It was read by one of their own men. Yet "to have heard the law read out was no claim to acceptance with God." The hearing of the Word must find its expression in action which would engage lips and heart and hands.

Here was the threefold badge of every Christian — lips to confess that Jesus is the Lord, a heart to believe that God raised Him up from the dead, and hands to bless material things for His glory. It was her "liturgy" to translate these truths into a life, to make applications which no one could miss. This activity was her way to heaven, the generating force of her missionary spirit. This was and is and always will be the response which God expects from His children whom He left in the world.

A second attitude strengthened these women of ancient Christendom and that was their growing sense of community. In the Church they joined the traditional prayers in common. Their litanies required repetitive audience reaction. They sang as a community the Jewish songs of praise which gathered the entire cosmos into a mighty hymn of thanksgiving. This communal objective worship demanded action of women both in and out of the church. The hands which offered the bread, which rose in a united prayer, which received the Body of Christ at the banquet produced fruit in Christian art because Christ willed to work through them. Here was the center of the new worship. As Christians they were brought to the presence of the Son of God, Mediator and Saviour of the world. Even women were given new power to be His "fellow-offerers," to be His "priestly people," "co-saviors of the world."

The person of Christ was God in Galilee, in Antioch, and in Rome. Wherever He came His love took possession of converts as His own. They were consumed by desire to approach Him, to tell the world what they had found, and to draw others to Him. It was the Christ who had called these women His friends. This love called forth a response of love. Women everywhere gave a gift first of themselves, then of their families, and lastly of the works of

their hands. Some may call what they gave sacrifice — but if it were that, there was no hint of regret or difficulty in their giving.

Christ called forth woman to her true vocation of bride, and artist and mother. Had He not made a bridal covenant with her and called His Kingdom a wedding feast? What would be more natural than that the Bridegroom give her bread and wine for the feast. Yet when He tells her that the Bread which He gives is His Body and the wine which He gives is His Blood her joy knew no limits. Here was a spiritual communion such as no bride had ever had. Here was inspiration for art such as no master had dreamed. Here was a union which would bring forth a new fruit, a new creation — a Christian. As bride she would be sanctified “without spot or wrinkle.” As artist she would create beautiful and useful things for God’s glory. As mother she would bring forth spiritual offspring in rich fruitfulness. Her dignity grew as she worshiped and adored an Infinite God and her thankfulness was without bound at the thought of His goodness to her. Everywhere the spread of Christianity was quickened by this joy.

So it was that women of the first Christian centuries went home and spoke eloquently of the new plan of salvation in and with and through Christ. Here was a story which called forth all her talents of expression. Sometimes her proclamation was vocal, sometimes it was made with “visible language” or art; but as time went on she became adept at making clear the relationship between her world and Christ’s teaching. Somehow the Christian “message” was easy for her to appreciate because it was filled with wonder and mystery and poetry and symbol. Many times she learned intuitively and may have been quite hazy about the dogmatic explanation of Incarnation or Trinity, but these women were not bothered by their lack of formal theology. Through her imagination and natural sensitivity she knew how to relate matter and spirit and she was gifted to integrate rather than analyze the mysteries of which she spoke. She found too that in her family she had a particular audience which required a particular approach, “a kerygmatic approach to theology” which would proclaim Christ’s doctrines as “glad tidings.”

This is the story of woman in the early Church as she sowed the Word of Christ in the seed-ground of her family. Somewhere

in the passing centuries something happened both to the woman and to her joyous proclamation of redemption. Once when she planted a flower she saw the growth of the Kingdom of God. Today she is not concerned with the growth of the Kingdom since that has so often been reserved for the "professional religious." Once she wove a garment to cover the nakedness of Christ's poor. Today it is difficult for her to sense the Presence of Christ anywhere because His Presence has been so often localized in a tabernacle. Once she sketched a picture or baked a loaf or molded a little cross as a response of love to her God. Today she seldom considers her work as a way of giving thanks.

To discover the cause of these changes we need only listen again to St. Pius X who diagnosed the disease and prescribed the cure. It is not a pretty picture to see thousands of women busy about many things while the one thing necessary is ignored. St. Pius X pleaded that all Christians again be given an active share in the most sublime mysteries. Women too have a role, an active role, to play in this most sacred of actions. We know, "that the layman is bound by the rules laid down for the laity,"² but this rule does not require a woman to be a "dumb spectator." Without this primary worship at the altar she will not be fired to continue these sacred acts of worship in her home. She will find no need for religious art or the vessels of home devotion. Once she loses her "Eucharistic attitude," which continually gives thanks because thanks was actively offered at Mass, she will no longer express her gratitude in the making of artifacts. No urgency will spur her on to artistic creation which will tell of God's glory with greater emphasis than Nature itself.

Yet all this comparison of past and present is no more than historical reconstruction unless we can begin a positive action in our own lives. To put first things first I believe there will be no renaissance of Christian art in the homes of today without a previous renewal of woman's contact with Christ—first in the sacraments He gave us and especially in the worship service. If she can trustingly touch the hem of His garment at Holy Mass and there be made wholly His, she will of necessity express that

² Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians*,

Mystery. She may use paint or clay or color. She may use thread or dough or song, but whatever her media she, like Miriam, will sing her "psalm to the Lord so great and glorious." "And all women-folk will follow her and take up from her her refrain."³

The second plea for a living unity between the worship of the Church and family art concerns woman as a teacher. If she can but find "in the liturgy of the laity" her role, different from the clergy but needed nonetheless, in the corporate worship of the Christian community; she will imitate in the cell of her family what she has learned of the common prayer, song, and art of the Church. Women are especially sensitive to the power of imitative learning. It is the way she learned from her mother. It is the way she prefers to teach her children. If she experiences this "learning by doing with others" in the Church, she will pass on to the next generation a much truer sense of community. There is no teacher of art or music who is not cognizant of the educative power of learning in a small group like that of the family. Only one thing is lacking and that is the vigor of spirit in a mother who realizes her vocation as a Christian teacher.

There should also be one last word concerning the subject matter of art in the Christian family. There has been so much discussion of liturgical and popular art that we fail to see the problem as two sides of one coin. Liturgists have fired the word, "sentimental"; and broken many an image on Barkley St. Those who have grown up with their "sentimental saints" have shouted back with catcalls of "highbrow." As a result no one is convinced of anything but their own prejudices.

It seems to me that the art of our Christian homes can help to make peace between the two camps by creating what is most needed, namely an art which is simple, forceful and rightly made. Art in the home will of necessity be simple because neither the average woman nor her children are aesthetes. If this "visible language" is to be worth a thousand words, it must be easily understood at a glance. There is no time for long explanations or museum notes on the author's purpose. Your family may be your severest critic, yet that is good because it develops a discipline

³ Exod. 15:20-22.

which is close to life and close to earth. Yet with all its simplicity the themes of home art will have content, often great and deep theological content. Why should not the art of the Catholic home express the truths which the woman of the house has drunk deep at the "Mysterium"? Incarnation, Manifestation, Passion, and Resurrection are not beyond her scope. Why can she not translate Christ's message into the symbol of Vine or Fish or Good Shepherd? It is a way for her to express her faith through "visual aids." She will produce an art with which we and our children can feel at home, especially at home with Christ. I have never felt quite so far from God as I did in an overelaborate Baroque church in southern Germany. In all the pomp and circumstance I had completely lost Christ, our Brother.

The need to create a proper setting for the things of God in the home will call forth all sorts of techniques of art expression. At the beginning of the Year of Grace we have used the prophecies of our coming Saviour as meal prayers. Beautifully lettered cards, simple wall posters, more intricate appliquéd hangings have all told of Isaiah and John the Baptist. We have made Christmas cards of gingerbread lebkuchen and of most modern silk-screen processes. We have helped along the reading of Scripture with prints and charts and maps. We have gathered and arranged flowers of the Bible and designed and planted a Bible garden. We have drawn pictures of Old Testament women on rubbed slabs of wood, and we have photographed a series of 80 colored transparencies to illustrate the famous *Hallel Psalms*. We have made finger paintings of the Exodus. We have used wet chalk and yarn to follow the wanderings of Paul and Cyrus.

Sometimes we are tempted to keep these artistic (?) expressions and use them over each year. Then we ask ourselves, shall we check the creativeness of next year's artist? A child's art is a continuous and spontaneous interpretation of what he feels, thinks, does, and sees. If he never sees God with the eyes of faith, nor forms in visible language his thoughts of God, nor releases his feelings about God through his natural creative urge, that child will be frustrated because God demands expression from and through this His creature.

In most cases it is the mother who is the initiator of the crea-

tive work in a family. She will provide the inspiration and often the situations which draw out our praise of God. She will motivate the work through crisis and cross until it is completed. She is generous in her praise and honest in her criticism. Her rewards build self-confidence and her tardy frown molds perseverance. She knows that each child as an individual has much to offer, yet she values the family as the perfect school of integration. She balances the growth of the individual with the growth of the community in her house. She will teach how "to give way" and "to listen through" in order to plan and work together in a group. She will delegate responsibilities and leave the evaluation to God. Above all she will participate actively in the plan of God with her talents and her arts. She will know that Christ lives in her and she will not rest until all parts of His Body are so invigorated.

Here we return again to the beginning of our thesis that Christ, the Great Liturgist, works among us today, and it remains our little liturgy to show Him to our times through word and act and art. If as women we can but touch Him as Mediator, Life will flow from Him and make us whole. He will guide us to His Father who awaits our response of praise and thanksgiving. If our response is generous as it was in Galilee and Antioch and Rome then we too one day will hear Christ's praise for the "fruit of our hands."

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The Architect as a Christian Artist

Father Adrian of St. Joseph, O.C.D.

THE arts have served as handmaids in the development of Christianity, for the Church has long recognized man's need of the sensible as an expression of the spiritual. Beauty is an essential part of life; it is a symbolical manifestation of things that cannot be represented concretely. Since Christian art is something shared in common and not the possession of a few, it cannot be isolated from life as a whole. In the Mass all the arts are raised to their highest dignity; they are brought together in one place and associated with the supreme act of fallen man.¹ Painting, sculpture, architecture, music, poetry, and the dramatic arts along with the minor arts, such as those of the skilled craftsmen all are harmonized and produce an aesthetic whole. In the Mass all the beauty man has ever known on earth is transformed into an expression of his reverence for almighty God. Thus, the highest function of the arts is found in their office of enhancing the beauty of the house of God and in fostering the faith and piety of those who assist at the divine service. For this reason sacred art has always been cultivated by the Church with vigilant interest. If the arts are to serve as a legitimate representation of the sacred, they must be in agreement with the laws of the Church and true asceticism.²

¹ Ralph Adams Cram, "Restore Civilization Through Art," *Catholic Mind*, January 8, 1923, p. 18.

² Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office to the Bishops of the World, June 30, 1952.

Function and Symbol

Every building requires a considerable amount of attention on the part of the architect before it is completed; the designing of an edifice which is to be dedicated to religious services exacts an *extraordinary* amount of study and reflection. The basic function of a building is to provide shelter. Aside from this demand, a religious edifice must fulfill an aesthetic purpose of the highest order. While secular buildings seldom express by their design the actual services to which they have been erected, sacred structures must be representative of the exalted purpose to which they have been dedicated; they must stand apart as consecrated to God. The church architect who is truly successful portrays the spirit, or more precisely, the theology of the worshipers whose church he designs. If the architect is of the same household of faith, he gives expression to his own spiritual attitudes; otherwise he must apply himself to the study of the particular faith and its cultural expression.

Special Problems for Religious Orders

Within the Church there are numerous religious families which form an harmonious whole, but still possess their distinctive disciplines and have a culture of their own. Owing to this, the religious orders require more attention on the part of the architect than is usually needed in designs for the churches of the faithful in general. Apart from the necessity of expressing the respective religious spirits architecturally, there is the more fundamental requisite of having the building serve their special needs. In fact, it is in this latter requirement that the orders give emphasis to their special vocation in the life of the mystical body of Christ.

The churches of active religious orders have no need of a chancel choir, for the divine office is not chanted in common. In the Jesuit Church of the Gesù at Rome, the Baroque grandeur is achieved within a close adherence to classical forms of an earlier age, but without the traditional choir so necessary for monastic spirituality. Along with this practical change of the design to conform to the actual necessities of the Jesuits, the Church of the Gesù is an

expression of the Jesuit spirit. The fondness of the Jesuit mind for a Baroque expression is realized in literature as well. Richard Crashaw, the seventeenth-century English poet, betrays a considerable Baroque influence in the poetry he wrote during the period he was under a decidedly Ignatian influence.³ In the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the nineteenth-century Jesuit poet, there is the use of images Baroque in feeling. Baroque became the art of the Church universal and showed little attachment to any particular territory. It is quite logical that it also became the artistic expression of the Jesuits whose mission has always been so closely united to the cause of the papacy. Baroque itself has an aesthetic alliance to the Ignatian spirit, a spirit of militant orthodoxy and realism with a pervading consciousness of the divine.⁴

The churches of the monastic orders have evolved but little in their basic design; in this the architecture is a faithful witness to the constancy of the monks through the centuries. It is interesting to note that monastic architecture is often a good index to the fidelity of the religious to their vocation in the Church. While we are conscious of a number of exceptions, it is apparent that the fondness for contemporary styles is evidenced by the more active congregations; the Cistercians, in particular the Trappists, show a conservative taste. Contemporary architecture can hardly hope to replace the traditional styles as a legitimate expression of the Cistercian spirit. On the practical side, the great emphasis the monastic orders place on the liturgy and the large number of monks who inhabit the cloisters contribute to the solemnity and the notion of infinitude characterized by the great abbey churches. The cloister walks, the chapter rooms, the monastic buildings as a whole embody the grandeur of the liturgy; there is a refreshing absence of the narrow inhibitions of secularism.

A study of the monasteries of friars reveals an aesthetical spirit closely akin to the ideals of the mixed life, the delicate balance of contemplative vocation with the exercise of the apostolic mission. Yet, we must admit that there is often no satisfying expres-

³ Helen C. White, Ruth C. Wallenstein, and Ricardo Quintana, *Seventeenth-Century Verse and Prose. I* (New York, 1951), pp. 369-370.

⁴ Charles Rufus Morey, *Christian Art* (New York, 1935), pp. 63-64.

sion given to the spirit of these orders. The secularistic influences are clearly in command; in some cases, however, a definitely Benedictine expression is substituted.

Of all the orders the Discalced Carmelite Order seems to present the most difficulties to those who attempt to express its spirit in architecture. Carmel's unique combination of the contemplative and the apostolic life combined with the Teresian ideal of absolute poverty and simplicity come close to defying a truly satisfactory interpretation. With wonderful poetic insight, Father John W. Lynch has written, "All the Carmels are at Nazareth, / The convents and the corridors of saints, / The hopes of mystics, and the clear, unhindered / Moments when the stark walls keep the breath / Of all attainment and of gratitude."⁵ Nazareth is the ideal of Carmel, even in its material simplicity. Since the great emphasis in the Reformed Carmel is placed on mental prayer rather than on a rich monastic liturgy, the friar's choir reflects this preference in its modesty. At the same time the Order requires that the choir be separated from the church; this does not permit its traditional location in the chancel as in the monastic orders.

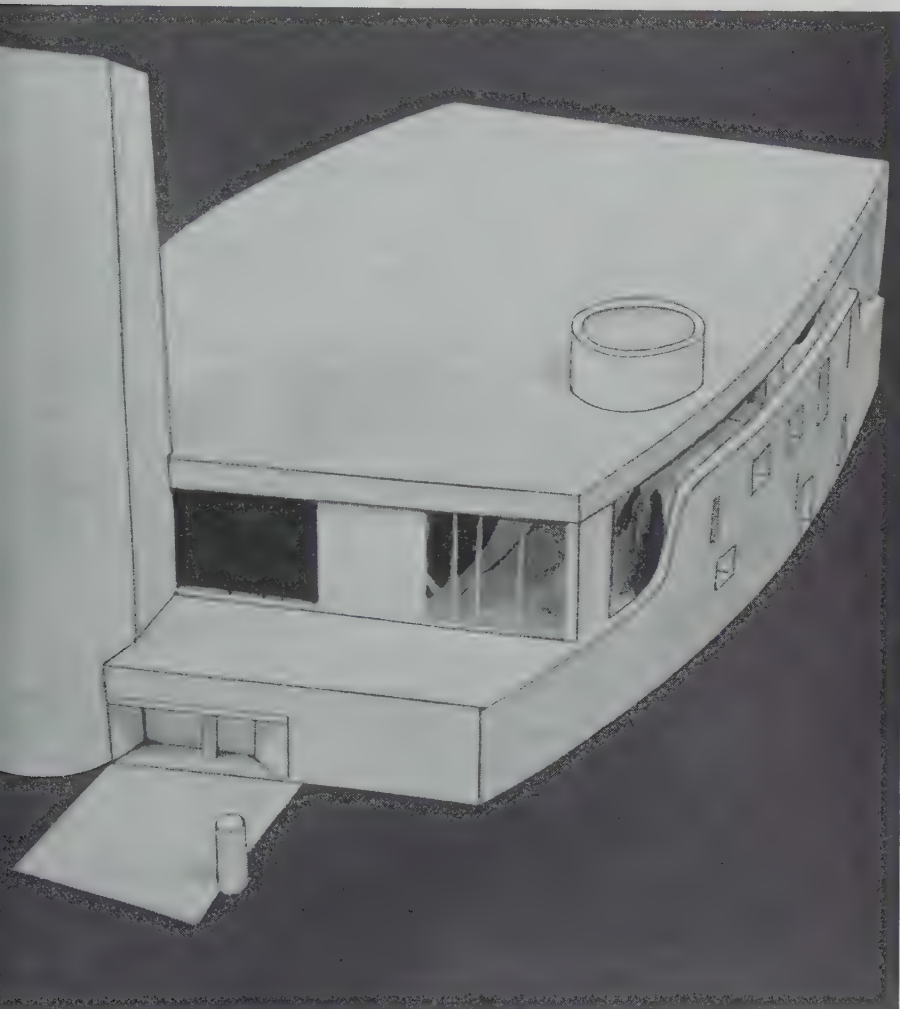
Quite recently, Jacques Michel, a French architect and member of the internationally renowned firm of Le Corbusier, conducted a study of the problems in expressing a particular religious spirit. Although he confined his study to the interpretation of the Carmelite spirit and ideals, especially as expressed by St. John of the Cross, his work might well serve as a guide to other artists who wish to give a contemporary representation to religious thought. It is not difficult for us to discover the reasons for Michel's success; he was introduced to Carmelite spirituality and aesthetics by Father Bruno of Jesus and Mary, a recognized authority on Carmelite mysticism.

A Carmelite Church

While at the Harvard graduate school of architecture, Jacques Michel began work on a design of a Discalced Carmelite church to be constructed in the Boston area; this was the theoretical problem assigned to him by the University. Despite his knowl-

⁵ John W. Lynch, *A Woman Wrapped in Silence* (New York, 1952), p. 158.

edge of Carmel, he was unfamiliar with the problems or demands proper to our American church buildings, and, we might add, to the American spirit of conservatism, something of which we ourselves are not too conscious. It is because of these handicaps and not in spite of them that his design is so worthy of our interest. We find his Church of St. Elias a triumph of the spiritual in contemporary architecture; it is an expression of a religious spirit,



EXTERIOR VIEW OF CARMELITE CHURCH

not a shelter adapted to sacred functions. Michel did not overlook any means of conveying the spiritual. Even the speedway passing the property, the parking lot, the other seemingly insignificant details of the theoretical problem were incorporated in such a manner that they take a part in sustaining the spiritual force of the design.

Harvard's recognition of Michel's achievement awarded him first place in the competition sponsored by the University. In every detail the design obeys the Sacred Canons and the more minute prescriptions of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. He worked in close association with the Carmelite Fathers in Brookline, Mass., and he showed them that his first concern was that they should accept his work as an adequate expression of Carmelite aesthetics.

It would not be quite honest to permit our enthusiasm for Michel's work to go unbalanced by some unfavorable criticism. After almost a year of reflection, we find that the Church of St. Elias is French in its appearance; no doubt this is due to its sculptural style which is as yet quite foreign to America, or more specifically, to New England. It suffers, too, from a want of a better arrangement of some of the interior furnishings, especially of two of the three confessionals. The choir overlooks the altar from the right of the sanctuary; this is a rather unusual feature, and hardly defensible from a liturgical standpoint. Still, after considering these failures, the Church of St. Elias is a positive success in religious aesthetics.

All our attention is centered on the altar and the Crucifix of dynamic proportions, which was inspired by a drawing made by St. John of the Cross. Without disturbing the main theme, there are two side altars dedicated to our Lady and St. Joseph. Our Lady's altar is in a small chapel separated from the Church proper by a somewhat semicircular wall. This chapel is bathed in natural light from a large aperture in the roof. The light flooding this shrine is deflected into the nave; certainly this is an unusually beautiful symbol in itself. All the windows, with the exception of those on the façade of the Church, are placed in the south wall, but in such positions that they cannot be seen from the interior of the Church. Without detracting from the emphasis placed on

the sanctuary, they illumine the nave in a multicolored light. In the baptistery there is a similar use of stained glass. Michel wished to give the baptistery a feeling of spiritual warmth, and consequently he used red glass as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. He achieved the spiritual, but not by the use of accidental religious symbols; Michel's Church is a unified symbol of great strength and intelligibility. Unlike the designs of the churches at Venice, Assy, and Audicourt, his is not sensational. It resembles the Church of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp, France, but without Ronchamp's alarming disregard for the liturgy.⁶

Study Older Architecture

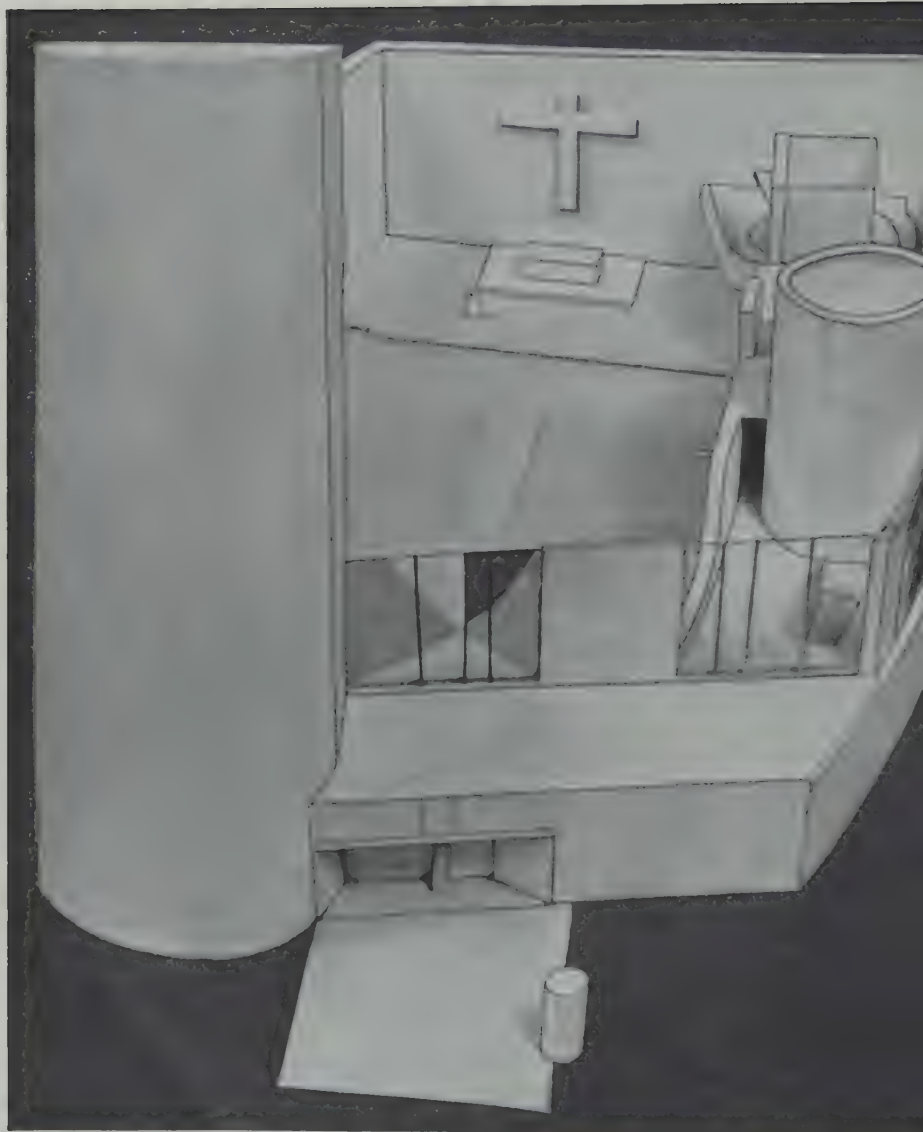
The church architects of today can profit a great deal from the study of the architecture of the past, especially the thoroughly Christian Gothic which was the development of a wonderfully integrated Catholicism. A return to the past in architecture, espe-

⁶ Cloud Meinberg, "The New Churches of Europe," *The Furrow*, June, 1957, p. 370.

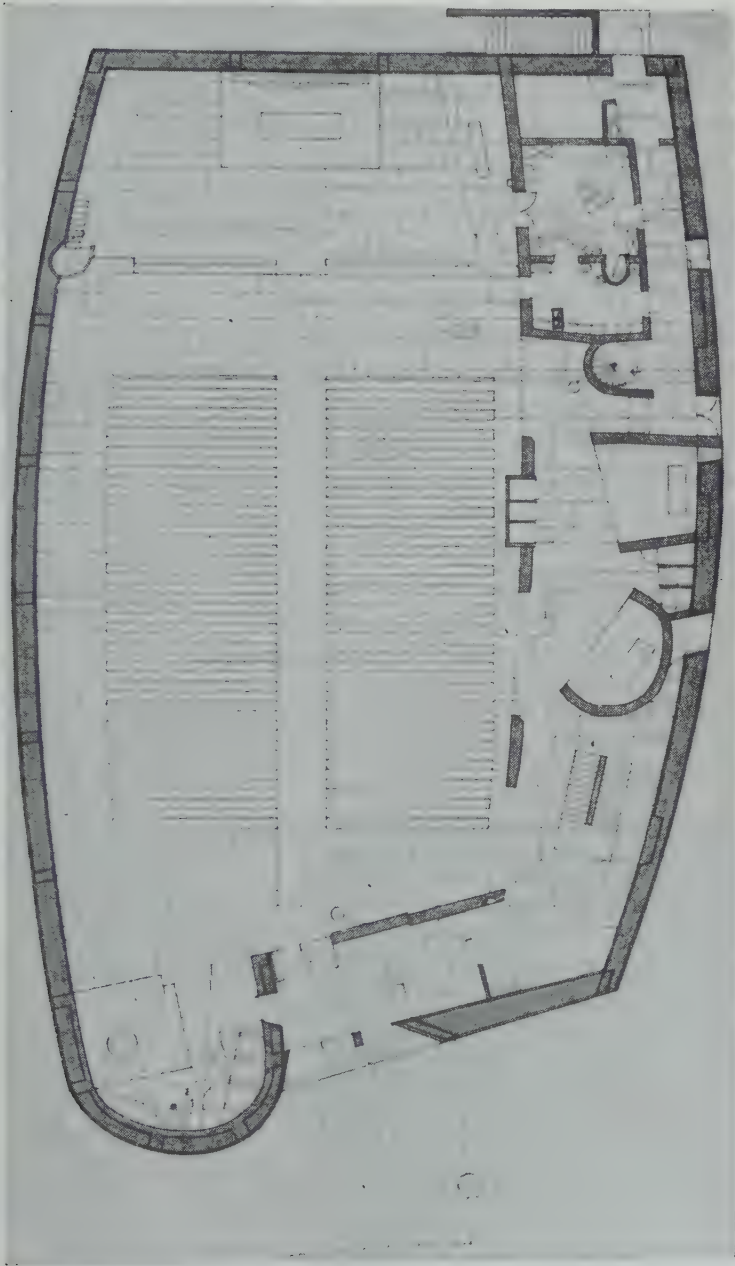
HEINZ MEMORIAL CHAPEL, PITTSBURGH, PA.



"We have not restored the spiritual values of the Middle Ages by copying the architecture of that period."



INTERIOR VIEW OF CARMELITE CHURCH



FLOOR PLAN OF CARMELITE CHURCH

cially a return as advocated by Ralph Adams Cram in his book *Gothic Revival* and as realized in the designs of his churches, results in an imitation of the past for the purpose of regaining the lost inheritance of a truly Catholic culture. John Ruskin, the British art critic of the nineteenth century, saw in Medieval Gothic the cure for the ugliness of his Victorian England and in the Middle Ages the answer to the problems related to the growth of industrialism. In England, the Ruskin-inspired return to the Gothic was further stimulated by the Oxford Movement and the rise of Anglican religious orders. Here in America, Ralph Adams Cram and Messieurs Maginnis and Walsh have created a number of quaint Gothic buildings throughout the country. We must admit that the harmony of the Middle Ages has scarcely been realized in our times by the imitations of Europe's Gothic churches. The remedy for our divided society is a return to the spiritual values of the Middle Ages, not to its artistic expression. We do not claim that the artists of the thirteenth century were all deeply religious men; but their society was not a divided one. They could not escape the powerful influence of Christianity.⁷

In the fourteenth century the Renaissance Movement dispelled

⁷ John R. M. Nolan, "Modern Church Architecture: The Elements of the Problem," *The Furrow*, June, 1957.



MT. ST. BERNARD
ABBEY,
CHARNWOOD
FOREST,
LEICESTERSHIRE:

— "a refreshing absence of the narrow inhibitions of secularism."

the harmony existing in society; today, more than at any other time in the history of the Church, we are experiencing the spiritual poverty caused by this separation. If we are to have a good Christian art, it must be informed with a truly Christian spirit; but if it is to have valid claims to art itself, it must be expressed in the idiom of our society.⁸ All true art is an expression of the age in which it developed. The true artist must never forget his work must have a meaning for the culture in which he lives. Therefore, the architect must realize that his art has a social function and that what at first seems to be merely the expression of an individual is in reality a realization of the spirit of an age.⁹

The Modern Artist's Challenge

If a return to the art of the past were simply an admission of the spiritual poverty inherent to our secularistic society, we might feel less anxious. We realize, however, that the attempts made in the past to associate religion to what is clearly archaic has actually widened the breach within our society. The Christian artist of today is torn between his allegiance to civil society, which is

⁸ Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, "The Christian Church," an address given at the opening of the First National Congress of Sacred Architecture, Bologna, September 23, 1955.

⁹ Nolan, p. 389.

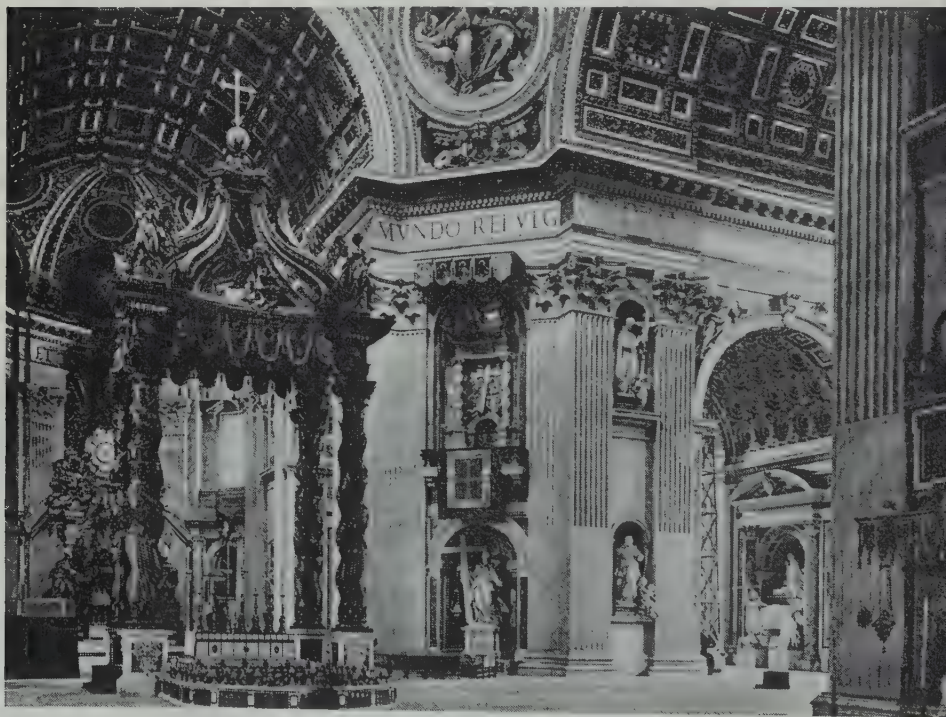
MT. ST. BERNARD'S:

"The great emphasis of the liturgy and the large number of monks who inhabit the cloisters contribute to the solemnity and the notion of infinitude characterized by the great abbey churches."



non-Christian, and to the Church. While the demands of modern society and of the indispensable quality of sincerity basic to art itself forbid his expressing himself in the spirit of the Middle Ages, he cannot hope to portray the spiritual in the terms of modern paganism.

What can the artist do? He must give a *Christian inspiration* to modern art; he must infuse the spirit of Christ into the void of secularism. This is the solution advised by our Holy Father and blessed by him with the assurance that it can be done. Once Christianity has been restored, once the spirit of Christ again informs society, the artist will give expression to the spiritual in a language known to all His people.



HIGH ALTAR, ST. PETER

"Baroque became the art of the Church universal. . . . It is quite logical that it also became the artistic expression of the Jesuits whose mission has always been so closely united to the cause of the Papacy."

Very soon this year the Desclee Co. of New York will publish a book on Catholic Schools of Spirituality. The following will be part of it. In order to understand the artistic expression of a school of thought, you must know the essential spirit that is expressed. And so we incorporate this article here.

St. John of the Cross

Paul of the Cross, O.C.D.

CARMELITE spirituality owes just as much to St. John of the Cross as it does to St. Teresa. At first sight the audience and the influence of the mystical doctor seem destined to remain very restricted. Did he not address himself to:

Certain persons of our holy religion of the primitives of Mount Carmel, men and women, who by the grace of God are on the pathway of this mount [of Carmel]. . . . They indeed are already detached from the things of this life and will the better understand this doctrine of detachment of spirit.¹

Nevertheless experience proves that the saint's influence was not limited and that it increased and went far beyond the walls of Carmel. No doubt this is to be explained by the fact that St. John of the Cross pursued a single objective with a clarity of vision which was equaled only by the rigor of his teaching and the heroic fixity of a will focused on the absolute. What did he actually ask? Nothing else than to go on as far as divine union in transforming love. And what does he teach? The spiritual attitude necessary for one who would arrive promptly at the summit of the Mount of Perfection. Now "whatever may be the mountain" in our life, and whatever form it may take, "there is a straight path leading to the summit and it is this way that he wishes to point out to souls."²

¹ *Prologue to the Ascent of Mount Carmel*, I, 6.

² Lucien Marie de Saint-Joseph, O.C.D., *Les œuvres spirituelles de S. Jean de la Croix*, Introduction, 31, Desclee de Brouwer.

Therefore a soul, who is resolved to advance toward sanctity and feels inwardly attracted to St. John's abrupt and direct method, will find precious help in this sure and experienced guide. Did he not, like his Master, begin *to do* before he began *to teach*?

The mystical doctor considers mystical life under its essential and complementary aspects. First, he discusses the work of detachment in a soul advancing toward God; then he examines God's direct action on a soul who submits passively to this divine action. He then sings of the joys and splendors of divine union. In other words, his work embraces the whole question of the transformation of our being and our way of acting under the influence of the Spirit of God.

Heroically faithful to the spirit of the primitive Rule that St. Teresa, in reforming the Order, made it possible for him to live; focusing on its essential precept: union with God in uninterrupted prayer, St. John of the Cross has given us a work that is unique not only because of the holiness of his life, but because of the psychological and mystical richness of his experience. He goes beyond pure speculation because he wants, lovingly, tenderly, and warmly, to persuade souls to journey along the path of divine union and to show them its treasures. To do this he makes use of a very rare poetic gift which enables him sweetly to communicate to souls the lights he has received and the living flame of his love for God.

Which Path Leads to the Summit of the Mount of Perfection?

With the whole tradition of Carmel to support him, John of the Cross unhesitatingly answers: "The path of the Bible and the Gospel, that is to say the path that is Christ. . ." At Carmel, the soul always draws strength from the divine Word. Of course this means the New Testament and also the Old Testament, for Carmel's roots are fixed deep in Scripture. John of the Cross kept the Bible and two or three other books of piety in his cell. He never ceased to read and meditate the Bible. In it he searched not only for a knowledge of revelation but he believed that he could find in its pages the laws that always govern the dealings of the Holy Spirit with souls.

Did he think that beyond the literal meaning one ought to look

for a deep mystical and spiritual meaning? Of course it is the Spirit alone who possesses the secret of this mystical meaning and it has been promised infallibly only to the Church but the Spirit grants it also to those who humbly follow the guidance of the Church in their search. John is skilled in this exegesis and his interpretations are those of a master. He believes that Scripture is the rule and measure of progress in interior life and that it enlarges one's own experience, containing as it does innumerable examples from the past.³

Christ at the Heart of St. John's Teaching

But God's word means above all the Gospels. In truth: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by His Son" (Hebr. 1:1-2). And the mystical doctor has declared that "God spoke but a single word and that word is His Son." And on another occasion he said: "God has told us everything in His Son; look well at Him for in Him you will find everything."⁴

As a matter of fact, St. John's teaching, like his life, was obviously based on the Gospels. He has placed himself in Christ's Heart and in the heart of Christ's teaching. It is true that his speculative study of the spiritual life does not seem to be Christo-centric. Nevertheless in it he forcefully affirms⁵ that no union with God is possible except in Christ, and this is true both of faith (which is adhesion to God in Christ) and of life. To reach God we must make Christ our model. St. John wants us always to desire to act like Christ. "Of what use is this life if it does not give us the opportunity of acting like Christ?" Christ crucified is the synthesis of his whole doctrine. "Let Christ crucified alone be enough for you; with Him suffer, with Him rejoice; never suffer or rejoice without Him."⁶

When he had reached the goal of mystical life he declared that knowledge of Christ's mysteries is the highest wisdom possible in this life: "The soul, being henceforth raised up . . . above all things,

³ J. Wehrle, *Saint Jean de la Croix, docteur*.

⁴ *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book 2, Chaps. 7 and 22.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Maxim 209.

may now make use of nothing to help it or to rise higher except the Word, the Spouse Himself."

"Let the soul long to enter into the darkness of the Cross which is the way of life." And perfection in the spiritual life will mean nothing else than an immense love of extreme poverty and suffering for the sake of the Beloved: "To love, is not to experience great things; it is to know great poverty and great suffering for the Loved One," that is to say, "for our great God crucified and humbled."⁷

The Shepherd with "His two fair arms outstretched and His Heart pierced through and through with love" dominates the life of St. John of the Cross.

If the mystical doctor carries, as he does, the image of the Crucified in his heart, it is also on the Crucified that he bases his whole doctrine. "If any one wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." It is truly the gospel teaching which is the foundation of the saint's teaching.

Detachment, a Program of Love

To imitate Christ, "any sense pleasure that is not purely for God's honor and glory must be renounced and given up for the love of Jesus Christ." Renouncement and love, is this not a complete description of Christ? It is also a complete description of St. John of the Cross.

Therefore it is within this frame of reference that we must consider his doctrine. Detachment in all things through absolute attachment to Christ. Renouncement is the obverse of love. "That you may possess all things, seek to possess nothing." "Desire to be detached from all things, empty and poor for Christ's sake."⁸

St. John of the Cross was to speak of this renunciation as no one else had ever done before. His flaming words have singular strength.

On the path up the mountain, the soul will meet and be tempted by false goods of many kinds. One by one they must be rejected and nothingness is to be preferred to them. Faced successively with temporal advantages, intellectual riches, virtues the soul be-

⁷ Maxim 235.

⁸ *The Ascent*, Book 1, Chap. 13.

lieves it possesses, graces, finally self, the soul must give to all the same answer: Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing.

This is a road nature cannot travel. St. John of the Cross knows this well, so he draws the strength needed for detachment from an impassioned attachment to Christ. "Do you want to be perfect? Draw near to Christ by meekness and humility, then follow in His footsteps to Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre."⁹ "If a man resolves to carry this cross for God's sake, he will find great refreshment and much sweetness and this will enable him to travel along this road, detached from all things and desiring nothing."¹⁰

Detachment, but No Disdain for Creatures

To follow Christ does not mean, according to St. John of the Cross, that one must in any way withdraw one's self from a system of human values or deny them by a renunciation of mind or senses. What he asks is that these values be used according to right order: the senses are to pass judgment on things of sense, the intellect is to appreciate things intellectual.

It is only when one wishes to attain to God and be united with Him that these things must be renounced for the sake of faith which henceforth is the only source of light, the only right path for this divine quest.

In two of his works he described the itinerary of the soul journeying toward the summits of divine union along the paths of renunciation: *The Ascent of Carmel* and *The Dark Night*; the first stresses the work of the soul while the second insists on the divine initiative.

St. John of the Cross describes in terms of night the work that is first accomplished in the sensible part of man, this is the active and passive night of the senses; then in the spiritual part, this is the active and passive night of the spirit. Here night is a symbol of the renunciation of things, a renunciation that is either voluntarily assumed or passively endured. The necessary role of the theological virtues is evident in the purification of the soul's spiritual faculties: intelligence is purified by faith, memory by hope, will by charity.

⁹ *Spiritual Sentences*, 176.

¹⁰ *The Ascent*, Book 2, Chap. 7.

The light cast upon the role of the theological virtues, and especially on faith, is one of the most important aspects of St. John's doctrine and because of its universal value goes far beyond the limits of Carmelite spirituality.

The Primacy and Function of Faith

What St. John is looking for, is the path that leads quickly and surely to the summit of the mount of perfection and therefore to union with God. From this point of view the place he gives to faith is better understood. Its mission is to purify the soul's vision of God. In fact it alone can remove whatever acts as a screen or an obstacle to the possession of God and enable us to see things truthfully because faith is: "an interior light derived from the light of God which enlightens all things according to His light and makes us see them as He sees them."¹¹

There are two reasons why this light derived from God is a light of shadows: faith must cleanse our intellect of notions that are simply human and that are in no way worthy of God.

How, in fact, can the divine Being be grasped by human intelligence? What man can feel and know about God is infinitely remote from what He is. . . . There is no communion or essential likeness between God and creatures, but there is an infinite distance between His nature and theirs.¹²

This affirmation of the absolute divine transcendence, as well as the consequences that follow, is a keystone of the spirituality of St. John and of Carmel.

But if God is infinitely beyond our intelligence, the soul cannot "go to Him unless she spares no effort to deny and refuse her natural as well as supernatural knowledge."¹³ For the human intelligence must enter into this night.

There is another reason why faith is "a light of shadows": it permits truth to be grasped only in darkness. Faith is a path "well suited for union with God" but this union is granted only "in a mirror and darkly."

Yet St. John will sing its praises because "even though it be

¹¹ P. Congar, O.P., *Esquisse du mystère de l'Église*.

¹² *The Ascent*, Book 2, Chap. 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Book 3, Chap. 2.

night," it enables us to know God and to embrace Him in the darkness.

I know well the fountains which rise and flee
In the night.¹⁴

This grasp of the mystery of God by means of faith is limited only by our generosity. A faith absolutely freed from every image, from every representation will give us God wholly:

The soul strays far from the road leading to divine union when it leans at all on its own understanding . . . not knowing how to release and detach itself therefrom.¹⁵

The soul must empty itself of all that is within its competency . . . and remain always detached and in darkness, leaning on obscure faith and taking it for its light and guide, not trusting to anything it understands, tastes, feels, or imagines.¹⁶

How Does Faith Grow?

St. John asks that this faith be exercised when, in speaking of prayer, he insists on the necessity of passing, at the prescribed time, from discursive meditation to "the obscure, general, loving" contemplation of the mystery of God.¹⁷ It is plain that the faith for which he asks is not theoretical or abstract but rich in love; it is a living faith.

Whence comes this faith? How is it strengthened in us?

Here appears the magnificent synthesis that St. John of the Cross achieves between the purest mysticism of Denis, negative and obscure, and the teaching that rightly gives priority of place to Christ in the spiritual life.

At no instant does St. John of the Cross forget that Christ is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebr. 12:2). Christ gives us faith and He is the first to benefit from the gift. When the eyes of the soul are fixed on Christ, the Incarnate Word, faith enables them to discover Him as He is in the mystery of His divine and human Person. Before addressing the divine Persons of the Trinity and acquiring a general, obscure, and confused knowledge of God, faith turns first to Christ and, through faith, the soul is in a certain

¹⁴ *Mystical Poems.*

¹⁵ *The Ascent*, Book 2, Chap. 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Book 2, Chap. 13.

sense made like Him: "All the wisdom of God which is the Son of God is communicated to the soul in faith."¹⁸

To attain to God it is, therefore, essential to look with eyes illumined by faith upon Him who is the way: "If you look at Him closely, you will find in Him all things. . . . You will find in Him the wisdom of the marvels of God, as my Apostle said: In the Son of God are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God."¹⁹

Christ considered "in faith" becomes the door that introduces us into the mystery and divine life of the Trinity. To St. John of the Cross, as well as to the sacred writer, Christ is at the same time the author and finisher of our faith.

Faith, Hope, and Charity

The path followed by St. John of the Cross in the purification of the intelligence by faith resembles that taken by him in the purification of the memory by hope.

As to hope, there is no doubt that it renders the memory empty and brings darkness over it as to things of this life and the next; for hope is ever concerned about things not yet possessed, if they were already possessed there would be no place for hope.²⁰

And in the purification of the will by charity:

Charity creates an absolute void in the will inasmuch as it obliges us to love God above all things. This can only take place when our affection for things is centered wholly in God. For this reason Christ says in St. Luke: "He who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be My disciple."

For when the soul is detached from all things and has emptied and detached itself . . . which is all that the soul can do on its part . . . then it is impossible that God will not perform His part which is to communicate Himself to it, at least in secret and in silence.

It is more impossible than that the sun should fail to shine in a serene and unclouded sky. For as the sun, when it rises in the early morning and shines into your house, will enter if you open the shutter, even so will God who keeps Israel and slumbers not (Ps. 120:4), still less sleeps, enter the soul that is empty and fill it with divine blessings.²¹

Union Is the Transformation of the Soul in God by the Spirit of Love

If there is in the spiritual doctrine of St. John of the Cross a

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Book 2, Chap. 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Book 1, Chap. 22.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Book 2, Chap. 6.

²¹ Cf. *The Living Flame*, Book 3, Chap. 40.

dark mountainside and a steep path of renunciation and of faith for the soul who ascends the mountain of Carmel in the footsteps of Christ, there is also a summit of light awaiting the generous soul who ascends with Him. St. John of the Cross describes and praises this summit in his *Spiritual Canticle* and *Living Flame of Love*.

Nada. . . . Todo. . . . Nothingness. . . . All things. . . . The Doctor of *nothingness* is even more admirable when he hymns the union of love with God, its splendors and its joys. Of the "complete beatitude promised in the mountain, he is the peerless doctor."²²

By poverty of spirit, by faith, by hope, and also by charity, St. John has dug "deep caverns" in the soul, infinite capacities that God longs to fill with this love "that He has prepared for those who love Him."

Desiring that other souls may benefit by what he himself has experienced, the Mystical Doctor invites them to embark with him upon this "happy adventure." He urges them: "All this is yours, all this is for you; do not set yourself any lower goal."²³

All this means God; all this means the whole Trinity. Does not the Trinity dwell in the pure soul? Let the soul be conscious only of this. Let it seek this divine Spouse who lives in the depths of its being and who invites it to be united with Him.

The Word, in company with the Father and the Holy Spirit remains essentially hidden in the soul's deep center. To find Him, as is possible in loving union, the soul must go out and hide itself from all things created . . . enter into deepest recollection within itself, there to communicate with God in acts of love and affection.²⁴

Recollection contains the seed of the whole mystical life. St. John of the Cross explains that this is so because the author of this recollection is no other than the Holy Spirit who

enlightens the recollected intellect in proportion to its recollection, and as there can be no greater recollection of the intellect than in faith, the Holy Ghost will not enlighten it in any other way more than in that of faith. For the purer and more perfect the soul is in faith, the greater is the infusion of charity and the more abundant the gifts of the Holy Spirit.²⁵

²² Dom Chevalier, *Le Cantique Spirituel du Saint Jean de la Croix*, p. xxxiv.

²³ Maxim of the Saint.

²⁴ *Canticle 1*.

²⁵ *The Ascent*, Book 2, Chap. 29.

In this way from the very beginning the mystical life is seen to be placed under the motion of the Spirit of Love. Christ does not cease to act in the soul by His Spirit. This Spirit purifies the soul along the paths ascending the Mount, detaches the soul during the trials of the nights, then floods the soul with light and love. Although the soul did not realize this, it was the influence of the Spirit that directed it and carried it toward the heights. On reaching the summits the soul perceives and knows itself to be entirely submissive to divine inspiration.

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, is the great artisan of the Mystical life. He is the master of the union of the soul with the Word its Spouse.

Although it is not necessary to have attained to mystical union in order to understand what St. John of the Cross now has to say to us, still we must have some little experience of the secret action of the Holy Spirit in the soul. For one who has known this action, symbols and words themselves are eloquent. To those who lack this experience, these symbols and words fail to reveal the deep continuity of the action of the Holy Spirit and the unity that characterizes a life wholly marked with His zeal.

The Purified Soul

No doubt this unity can be explained, when the same image of divine action that was proposed by St. John of the Cross in the *Ascent* is repeated in the first stanza of *The Living Flame*. And it is only when the soul can look back at the road it has traversed and the transformation accomplished in it by this spirit of multiple activities that it becomes clearly aware of the power and admirable effects of divine Love.

It must be known that before this fire of love is introduced into the substance of the soul and is united with it, by means of perfect and complete purity and purgation, this flame, which is the Holy Spirit, wounds the soul, destroying and consuming in it, the imperfections of its evil habits. And this is the operation of the Holy Spirit, wherein He prepares it for divine union and the transformation of its substance in God through love.

For the same fire of love which afterward is united with the soul and glorifies it, is that which formerly assailed it in order to purify it. Even as the fire that penetrates the log of wood is the same fire that first of all attacked and wounded

it with its flame, cleansing and stripping it of its cold accident until, by means of its heat, it could enter it and transform it into itself.²⁶

In this way the Holy Spirit enabled the soul to detach itself progressively from all things, buried it deep in faith, enlightened its darkness, helped it to go out of itself, brought it in the prayer of union to allow itself to die interiorly and in pain cleansed it during the great passive purifications of the nights. Now it is He who touches its inmost being with luminous and transforming fire. Throughout this whole work the soul never ceased to descend more deeply into its inner depths and to draw near this center whence it has its origin in God. Now this flame "transforms it into itself and gives it sweetness, peace, and light."

O living Flame of Love,
With tenderness you wound
My soul in its inmost depths.
You now no longer oppress me
Perfect me now if You will,
Break the web of this sweet encounter.²⁷

To describe the action of the Holy Spirit and the graces given the soul, St. John of the Cross has recourse in his poems to the "rich and burning words"²⁸ that the liturgy so often uses. In souls whom He is leading to transforming union, He is "the gentle breeze," "the unction," "the fire," "the perfume," "the living water." He "breathes" through the garden of the soul, and each time that He touches the soul, He "communicates to it most delicately a knowledge full of serene and peaceful love."²⁹ He gives the soul the fragrance of divine sweetness like "the amber sends forth its perfume."³⁰ But more than all else He is in it this living fire

which not only consumes and transforms it in sweet love but burns it and covers it with flames. Each time this flame breaks forth, it bathes it in glory and refreshes it with everlasting life. Such is the action of the Holy Spirit.³¹

This divine fire "transforms the soul into itself and becomes a burn of ardent fire." "Yet this vehement and consuming fire does

²⁶ *The Living Flame*, stanza 1, 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, stanza 1.

²⁸ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 26; *The Living Flame*, stanza 3.

²⁹ François de Sainte-Marie, *Initiation a Saint Jean de la Croix*, p. 175.

³⁰ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 31.

³¹ *The Living Flame*, stanza 1.

not destroy the soul. . . . It divinizes it, on the contrary, according to the measure of its love, fills it with delights, enkindling it with its fire and the sweetest ardors."

"O sweet burn," cries the Mystical Doctor, "O tender wound! O delicate touch! . . . O lamps of fire! . . . In Your sweet breathing, so full of glory and good things, how tenderly You fill with Your love. . . ." ³²

The action of the Holy Spirit is wholly concerned with the union of the soul with the Word, its Spouse. The *Spiritual Canticle* first describes the close of this painful night that prepares for the espousals and gives hint of "the waking of dawn" (stanzas 1-12); then the espousals themselves are described (stanzas 13-27); and lastly the spiritual marriage (stanzas 28-39). It is this marriage that gives the soul a very deep understanding of the inexhaustible mysteries of Christ and, by enabling the soul to live with the life of God Himself, draws it into the bosom of the Trinity. "There it breathes to God the same breath of love that the Father breathes to the Son and the Son to the Father and this is the Holy Spirit Himself whom they breathe into it." ³³

The Living Flame also sings of "the most perfect and the richest love" that of the soul united to God by love; and it tries to describe the flaming of this love in the soul and it gives an analysis of the state of a soul that has reached this fullness of love. But when the Mystical Doctor begins to comment on the last stanza of his poem in which he sings of the mysterious awakening of God in the soul, overwhelmed then by "all the fragrance and pleasing perfumes of all the flowers in the world," he pauses: "I would not want to speak of this aspiration, nor am I able to say how full it is of the goodness and the glory of God's most tender love for the soul. Because I see clearly that I cannot describe it and if I were to speak, men would believe that such a description would be possible. . . ." ³⁴

Life of Union

In the soul united to Christ by the Spirit, in whom it has just

³² *Ibid.*, stanza 4.

³³ *The Spiritual Canticle*, 39.

³⁴ *The Living Flame*.

been reborn, now open the great deeps of Trinitarian life. But where St. Teresa seems to see a goal which she contemplates, St. John of the Cross finds a life with which he intends to nourish himself and which he intends to live in truth.

St. Teresa writes in the *Interior Castle* (seventh mansion):

The soul introduced into this mansion of spiritual marriage see the Persons of the Blessed Trinity reveal themselves to it . . . all three communicate themselves to the soul and speak to it. They discover to it the meaning of the Gospel passage in which Our Lord announces that He will come with the Father and the Holy Spirit to make His dwelling in the soul who loves Him and keeps His commandments.

Going still further, St. John declares, in all truth, but with remarkable daring:

The soul can . . . love God as much as God loves it because it loves Him with the same love with which He loves it and this is the Holy Spirit.³⁵

Granted that God in His goodness raises the soul to become deiform and unites it to the most blessed Trinity, making it divine by participation, how would it be hard to believe that it made its acts of intelligence, knowledge, and love in the Trinity, with the Trinity, like the Trinity, but by participation.³⁶

It is evident that the riches poured by St. John of the Cross into Carmel's treasury are great. Contemplative souls never cease to draw from this treasury.

When the Church made him a universal "doctor" by giving him the title *Mystical Doctor*, contemplatives were assured that they would find no guide more experienced, more daring, more sure in every way, one who could lead them along the paths of *Nothingness* to the possession of the *All* and the splendors of divine union.

* * *

Under the impulsion and *élan* given by St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross Carmel entered upon an era of prosperity and could count souls of great value, skilled both in theory and practice.

The close of the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century are truly the golden age of the Reformed Carmel. They witnessed the rapid multiplication of Carmelite houses for men and women. In Spain the very name of *Salmanticenses* suffices to testify to the intense intellectual and theological activity of the order.

³⁵ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 37.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, stanza 38.

While John of Jesus-Mary, Thomas of Jesus, Joseph of Jesus-Mary (Quiroga), Philip of the Trinity, and, a little later, Joseph of the Holy Ghost, studied the whole question of the mystical life, especially the difficult problem of acquired and infused contemplation, the *Reform of Touraine*, with the Venerable John of Saint-Samson strove to restore the primitive spirit of silence and solitude in all its purity. The humble blind man of Rennes became the master and director of a whole line of spiritual men.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, a simple lay brother, the cook of the convent of Rue de la Vaugirard — Lawrence of the Resurrection — brought back contemplative life to "the practice of the presence of God," returning in this way to the primitive spirit of Elias: "Yahweh lives in whose presence I am." He said:

In the sight of God thoughts count for little, love means everything. It is not necessary to have great things to do: I can turn my little omelette in the pan for the love of God; when that is done and if I have nothing more to do I can prostrate myself on the ground and adore God who has given me the grace to do what I have done, then I rise happier than a king. When I can do nothing else, I can always pick up a straw from the ground for the love of God. . . .

Men seek methods for learning how to love God. They want to reach their goal by, I do not know how many different practices. They go to a lot of trouble to stay in His presence in a great number of ways; is it not much shorter and far more direct to do all things for His love, to make use of all the duties of one's state to express our love for Him, and to maintain His presence in us by our heart's commerce with Him? We need not go about this in any subtle way, all we must do is simply to do what we do.³⁷

But it is faith, and faith alone that makes it possible for the soul to remain in this presence of God. Lawrence of the Resurrection extols the good results of this practice in these words:

O faith! O faith! O admirable virtue which enlightens man's mind and leads him to a knowledge of His Creator. It is faith that reveals to me the infinite perfections of God, that gives me a perfect idea of His greatness, that enables me to know Him as He is. Faith teaches me in a short time more than I could ever learn in a long time in the schools.³⁸

Many of St. Teresa's daughters, in their turn, attained to a high degree of prayer and spiritual life, and profoundly influenced the most enlightened and the most saintly souls of their age.

For example, Blessed Marie of the Incarnation who was vener-

³⁷ Lawrence of the Resurrection, *Maximes spirituelles*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

ated by all the mystics of Paris at the time of Bérulle and St. Francis of Sales. The same is true of Anne of Jesus and Anne of St. Bartholomew who came from Spain to establish foundations in France and then went to Belgium. At Beaune lived the humble Marguerite of the Blessed Sacrament.

The attraction of Carmel was also felt by the repentant soul of Louise of la Vallière who became Louise of Mercy, and by the pure soul of Louise of France, the daughter of Louis XV who thirsted for reparation.

Carmel flourished not only in France. In other lands as well the influence of Carmelites was very beautiful; this is especially true in Florence where St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi lived, and a century later St. Teresa Margaret Redi.

Yet beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century there was a sudden change that lasted for more than one hundred years. It would seem as if the mystics were silent or that they had no new message to give. Must the riches of the past henceforth suffice? Was Carmel asked to live on these treasures without adding anything more? To believe this would be to misunderstand completely the perpetual renewal which is the nature of contemplative life.

Does not the name of Elias mean "the Verdant One"? A St. Teresa of the Child Jesus was to show the world that Carmel's vine continues to flower and bear fruit.

The examples of art form used in this article would be more meaningful if examined in their original language. Cf. El Monte Carmelo, Vol. 63, Fasc. 1, (1955).

Literary Characteristics of the Carmelite School of Mystical Theology

Father Joseph Mary of the Cross, O.C.D.

IT IS certain that literary form, in large measure, is born of doctrinal foundation; because if the style is the man, then we must confess that man, in a certain sense, is a conjunction of ideas and sentiments which make up a more or less logical and co-ordinated doctrine.

All spiritual writers have a characteristic literary style, because all have a common denominator, united to a central theme and a single determined end, which is pure and supernatural love.

That is why all, in spite of the obscurity, method, and constructivism of a numerous and select group, are lyrical, full of ardor, and intransigent, because all are in love with and in possession of eternal values; and slowness and indifference have no place before the infinite.

Within these generalities one can distinguish the tone and literary matter of each school, since all have their individualizing qualities, doctrinal foundation of each school differs in the accidental, and each one highlights one form of life and one type of being to a greater extent, which bring forth a certain manner of expression more or less definite. The three literary characteristics of the Carmelite School of Mysticism are clarity, vigor, and poetic rhythm.

It is quite clear, that signaling these three aesthetic marks as peculiar to the Order, we do not mean to say that they are the sole property of the School, nor that there are not Carmelite writers who are obscure, prosaic, and not so energetic in their expressions. We simply indicate the fact, and we affirm its universality and constancy after a more or less complete study.

It is also possible to show that there are schools of spirituality in which these qualities are outstanding because of their absence, although perhaps they have others more excellent and worthy of praise. We think that it would not be too difficult to make a comparative study of all this, but we judge that it would have much about it that would be odious, and it would lend itself to twisted interpretations.

Clarity and Simplicity

Thomism, the quintessence of Scholasticism, is perhaps the philosophical system which has most insisted on method, clarity, and order. No one like the Thomists, with the exception of the disciples of the Stagirite who were their predecessors and prototypes, gave so much importance to logic and all of its integrating elements and, as a result, none but they stated ontological problems with such rigor, and resolved them with such courage, probity, and clarity.

That is why Thomistic principles are linked and united in such a manner, that you cannot eliminate one without weakening the whole scientific edifice, and causing the whole to suffer harm. This love for logic and clarity contributed not a little to the effect that the spiritual doctrine of our Order would be translucent and transparent in contrast with others coming from the same source: Neoplatonism and Flemish mysticism. This sincere and methodical character of Thomism contributed to form logically the literary framework of the School making it honest, simple, and clear, without exuberances or obscurities as was becoming to such an ideology.

On the other hand, mental prayer in large doses, because of its constant introspection, minute self-examination, and detailed study of the psychic and passional ego is so fertile beneath the scientific gaze that there is neither a school nor a method of

experimental psychology that will not derive benefit from knowing the intimate recesses of the heart and of the soul. Besides, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and all of the common and extraordinary aids of grace and good faith, together with the proper conscience which is compelled by the presence of God, double the human value of purely natural prayer and help us to discover an interior world, richer in capacity, mysteries, and phenomena than the exterior world which surrounds us.

This intimate illumination which is produced and projected by prayer, explains concepts, especially those concerning the natural and supernatural life of the soul, in such a manner, that it is necessary to express them with simplicity and clarity.

Therefore, it is not extraordinary that the Carmelite School of Mysticism should distinguish itself by its clarity and transparency, since it has its roots grounded in Thomistic methodology and in its members' constant self-examination.

Vigor and Color

Clarity produces vigor and color and these, after all, are nothing but simplicity synthesized and turned into surging and palpitating images. When one has come to know a problem down to its very roots, when one has penetrated a being down to its very depths, when one has a clear and transparent idea of it, then the short phrase, vigorous and full of color, is spontaneously born, which expresses the idea without circumlocution and in plain language.

But this is not all. This vigor produces another quality also which thrives abundantly among ourselves; the security of the way chosen. This security depends on the constant study of the great theologians and the concentrated analysis of the Sacred Scriptures and of Tradition, work not only proper among the men in the School, but also constant among the women, the discalced nuns, who, by intimate contact with select spiritual masters and wise directors of conscience, know perfectly those theological elements which can aid them in composing their works. In addition, this security also, and principally, springs from those loving experiences of the interior life which gave spirit to a St. Teresa that she might defend meditation on the humanity of Christ as beneficial to those who are

in the higher states of contemplation and holiness, in spite of the opposition of accredited mystics; experience which lent force to M. Cecilia of the Nativity so that she might finish what St. John of the Cross had left incomplete; which makes easy the interpretation of the more complicated biblical passages to M. Teresa of Jesus and Mary (Piñeda); which made St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus expose a new and effective way to sanctity.

In the same way we owe the best pages of St. John of the Cross, Thomas of Jesus, John of Jesus and Mary, Dominic of Jesus and Mary, Anthony of the Cross, Alexander of St. Francis, to their rich experience more than to the full and abundant theological studies, because love is an inexhaustible spring and cannot be equated with knowledge; because as St. John of the Cross has said — repeating something of what had been insinuated by St. Paul, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas — “The more you love, so much more will you know” and it is true that all doubts, fears, and obscurities clear away and dissipate themselves when one truly loves. He will not be able to understand this who has not experienced it; but the truth is that when the soul finds itself in one of these intersections of the interior life, where it does not know where to go, nor what to do, the only guide is love and the only remedy, to allow oneself to be moved by it, because it is impossible that it will mislead us. On the contrary, there have been and are many masters, full of principles and theological consequences, who have been mistaken and do not advance a step in holiness because they are full of that egoism which impedes them from interpreting correctly that which they know, because they lack the light of loving experience.

To study the epistemological, cognitive value of love is a problem which is still new, and which offers more perspectives than appear at present and it will explain many phenomena of the mystical life and even of the human life, if it is analyzed exactly.

This security, the result of study and above all of experience, together with clarity, are the true sources of this vigor and color, just as the true cause of a bold pictorial technique which is vigorous and impressionistic, is the result of having worked on many canvasses, and having used many timid and hesitating brushstrokes, but having worked with enthusiasm and love.

Rhythm and Harmony

Rhythm and harmony, which are poetry in verse or in prose, can germinate only from a common and similar inheritance when the members which compose the group know a way to arrive at hypersensibilizing the soul and sharpening the most noble sentiments.

Beauty is a transcendental quality. All beings are beautiful, all possess the capacity, the potency to make us respond, to produce an aesthetic emotion in us. This occurrence depends solely on our sensitive ego.

The artist who has a sensitive soul, captures living beauty without any effort, necessarily and inevitably. The more artistic his sensitive ego, the more universal is his field of action, the beings which surround him become more beautiful, he finds less deformed beings.

He who does not naturally enjoy this select soul can come to possess it after a long and cruel purgation, in which sentimentality is lessened and those faculties which are capable of perceiving cosmic beauty begin to develop. Often this is an involuntary occurrence. Disgrace, contradiction, sickness, and solitude cause those who, up to that time, had seen only the prose of life, to begin to see its poetry. Proofs of this metamorphosis can be gathered abundantly from the history of world literature. Other times this purification is conscious, desired, and sought, but the results are the same in both cases.

This is the case in the Carmelite School whose members by the elimination of all disorders of the passions and the thwarting (destroying) of self-love, succeed in having the spirit remain serene, tranquil, and attuned to enjoy that silent music, that sonorous solitude, that beauty of all beings, for all become a remembrance of the Beloved, living footprints of the Creator, and all receive a surprising value unnoticed until that moment.

The delicacy of conscience penetrates the sensitive and somatic part of man, and it makes it detach itself from the delight it feels on coming in contact with nature. It becomes hypersensible, careful, simple, humble when treating with its equals, the inanimate beings.

All of the saints searched for rustic and unsheltered places

during their period of purgation. We know the penitential retreats which St. Benedict, St. Bruno, St. Francis, and St. John of the Cross sought. Their palates were not healthy and everything tasted of the creature, of the earth, of nothing, of man; but when they had mortified their appetites, they looked for the most beautiful places, with green fields covered with flowers, entertained by sonorous rivers, where they would erect their convents, because what had previously drawn them to the earth, now raised them to heaven; what had formerly been tedious, now filled their souls with beauty and light, and as beauty is that which is agreeable and delightful, everything delighted them, since they saw beauty in everything; because as Plotinus says,² everything is beautiful to those who have beautiful souls, or as Lipps would say later, the beauty of the exterior landscape depends on the beauty of the interior landscape.³

On the other hand, love completes this work of mortification. It is not that another element is coming into play, it is the same one seen in another light. Our souls left empty of creatures by means of the denial of the senses are simultaneously filled with God. We see all things in a new light, we know all beings as God has made them, as they have come from His hand, we see the variety of the world which surrounds us, as a marvelous exposition of the works of the Beloved, who at the same time is the supreme Maker, full of wisdom, of love, and delicacy, and the soul feels what the Bride feels in the presence of her Spouse; she sees that all He does is perfect, that all the details are lovable and that the reason for all the beauty of these things is His love, as the ugliness of beings comes from the lack of His love for them.

Perhaps this alone, would have done no more than produce aesthetic pleasure for the mystics of the Carmelite School as also for the mystics of other orders; the decisive thing, that which made this aesthetic pleasure which is felt in the most interior part of the soul rise to the lips of our authors and pour itself out in words, in chaste harmonies, in rhymed prose, in verse, was the example and the desire, almost the command of the two Founders of

¹ St. John of the Cross: *Maxims and Sentences*, maxim 46, ed. Silverio, Burgos.

² Cf. Fr. Jose Maria de la Cruz Moliner: *El mito de lo bello*, p. 19 ff., Burgos, 1951.

³ Cf. Fr. Jose Maria de la Cruz Moliner: *Sistemas esteticos*, p. 131 ff., Burgos, 1948.

the School.⁴

Of St. Teresa we know from Ann of Jesus "that on the feast of the Nativity she would be full of joy and would compose some canticles about the feast and would make us do it too."⁵ Father Jerome of St. Joseph tells us that St. Teresa, knowing by revelation that the soul of a Carmelite had entered heaven, "composed some couplets, celebrating her death, and made the religious sing them with dances and rejoicing."⁶ The same saint wrote to Mary of St. Joseph, prioress of Seville, "I am grateful that I chanced to receive the couplets which came from there; I sent them to my brother. . . ."⁷ To quote all the texts which show how very fond the saint was of this type of lyrical expression would be impossible. All the processes and letters are full of these episodes, which show how she would herself compose, and would make her daughters compose, strophes calculated to increase and dilate the love of Jesus. That is why José María Pemán has said so well that "St. Teresa still sings and laughs in her Carmelites . . ."⁸ because the poetic delicacy and sensibility of the discalced nuns is the precious legacy which was left to them by the Virgin of Avila.

St. John of the Cross also wished that the friars should compose devout and sincere poems, since he considered poetry as a great means of expressing love and of inciting this same love in others. He inculcated this literary taste among the students, and he would make the novices perform Christmas scenes and recite poems alluding to these scenes.⁹

⁴ St. Teresa is speaking of a very high state of perfection in which one begins to compose verses without knowing rhetoric: "O my God, what must that soul be when it is in this state? It wishes it were all tongue, in order that it may praise our Lord. It utters a thousand holy follies, striving continually to please Him by whom it is thus possessed. I know one, who, though she was no poet, yet composed, without any preparation, certain stanzas, full of feeling, most expressive of her pain: they were not the work of her own understanding; but, in order to have a greater fruition of that bliss which so sweet a pain occasioned her, she complained of it in that way to God. She was willing to be cut in pieces, soul and body, to show the delight she felt in that pain. To what torments could she be then exposed, that would not be delicious to endure for her Lord?" (*Life*, XVI, VI.) This psychological state, the fruit of divine love, plus the example of the two founding saints, are as we say, the cause of the magnificent poetic floraison of the School.

⁵ Informaciones de Salamanca, hechas en 1597.

⁶ H.C.D., libro I, c. XVIII.

⁷ B.M.C., tomo VIII, carta 162, n. 8.

⁸ *Poesía nueva de jesuitas*, p. 9. Estudio preliminar (Madrid, 1948).

⁹ B.M.C., tomo XII, p. 97, and F. Crisogono de J. Sacramentado: *Obras Completas de San Juan de la Cruz*, c. XIV, 310 (BAC, Madrid).

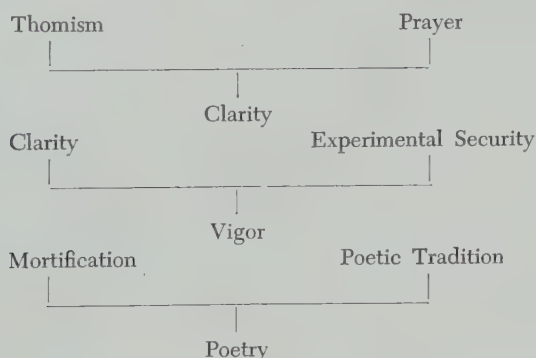
Gerardo de Diego, writing of the saint, said: "At his instigation the Carmelite nuns used poetry and music as a means of easing the pain of the flame of divine love. . . ." ¹⁰ This is what they say: "He ordered us to recite little couplets . . . and he would help us and inflame us by reciting his. . . ." ¹¹

He also read his most inspired compositions to the nuns and offered them occasion to copy and learn them, as he desired that this lyric taste should grow. He gave the forty cantos of the *Spiritual Canticle* to Sister Isabel, ¹² he left some mystical romances to Sister Magdalen; ¹³ the Community of Medina had in their possession many strophes composed by the saint, which they sang. ¹⁴

This tradition has not declined in the least. And it is to be admired that nearly all of our great spiritual writers, even the most serious and profound, the most scholastic and learned, have left some poetical composition. And it is no small matter that among the discalced nuns, literary works are abundant in quality and quantity as can be gathered from the historians of our literature.

Our Mystical School is as numerous as our Lyrical School, because the two are convertible and one can be taken for the other, and also because they germinate from the same root: the love of God and the detachment from all created beings.

The literary characteristics of the School, with their respective causes, can be graphically represented in the following way:



¹⁰ *Musica y ritmo en la poesia de San Juan de la Cruz*, Revista Escorial, Nov., 1942, p. 165.

¹¹ Cf. Rev. *El Monte Carmelo*, Apr.-Sept., 1949, p. 13.

¹² P. Crisogono: *op. cit.*, c. XVIII, p. 912.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11, c. X, p. 229.

¹⁴ Cf. *nota* 11.

ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTS

Clarity and Simplicity

Clarity as a positive quality of literary style, does not have the same merit nor does it offer the same aspects in the different members of the School, although in all it obeys one of the two causes already indicated above or the combined efficacy of both.

Each author was confronted with a series of problems and he had to resolve a number of difficulties proper to the chosen theme and inherent in the proposed end. There is quite a difference between analyzing mystical states and rising above the difficulties brought forth by the manifestation of the ineffable than it is to explain the ordinary phenomena of the interior life. In the same way it is quite different to try to explain the different stages of the spiritual way theologically and reason out its phenomena and vicissitudes, than it is to limit oneself to describing the ordinary effects of grace in the essence and the faculties of a soul. In spite of this, to accomplish either one of these tasks with neatness and clarity, and for an author to paint a luminous, austere, and simple picture of what he had proposed to himself, supposes an unusual talent and an achievement which should be recognized and admired without reserve.

Father John of Jesus and Mary (Aravalles), Father Michael of St. Augustine, and Mother Cecilia of the Nativity are worthy representatives of those writers of our Order who discovered the phenomena of the mystical life, and overcame the difficult test of manifesting by means of the senses what they had received in an extraordinary way and not with the aid of the senses. In their writings one does not find unnatural comparisons, or those obscure terms so common in other authors, and yet, no one has reached the proposed goal as they did; and in such a perfect manner.¹⁵

¹⁵ We could write much about our authors:

Pemán writes of F. Francis of Jesus that his poetic works are a display of talent and elegance.

Vicente de la Fuente, of Mary of St. Joseph, that she was one of "our best scholars." Menendez and Pelayo said that only through the poems of Mother Gregory of St. Teresa could one give all the satires and eclogues of those who set the precepts at that time.

Father John, with a grand display of precision and simplicity, describes in four masterly strokes the effects of divine union. Perhaps there will not be found a clearer and briefer account of this supernatural state in the history of our mystical literature:

Unitive love having attained its end, which is this ineffable union; the soul being united in this manner with its God, all the faculties remain deified; the memory is clear, stable, and firm, free from all multiplicity, only retaining God within itself; the understanding is enlightened, calmed, and illuminated with such an inaccessible and extraordinary light concerning things so deep and supernatural, that it tries to move and stops, without being able to go back or forward; and it remains in a simple knowledge and remembrance of God. What does the will do when amidst these secrets and favors it has reached its height in this life? As the understanding shows it the infinite loveliness of God, she seeing that she cannot satisfy this impulse of love, remains confused and weakened, and not loving with her own will, loves with the proper will of God. "Dicite dilecto meo, quia amore langueo": tell my love, says the understanding and the memory, that I give myself for I am weak and insufficient, and without strength to love him.

—Father John of Jesus and Mary (Aravalles): *Treatise on Prayer*, c. IX, pp. 82–83, Madrid, 1952.

With no less clarity, Father Michael explains the essence of that prayer he calls of solitude, and which is wont to give itself afterward to the prayer of simplicity.

It is therefore, founded on that profound longing of the soul for the Beloved, who has her suspended and entranced, who treats her with such love, who alienates her from all created beings, and who abstracts and separates her from the operation of the senses and the sensitive faculties, that they come to lose themselves and dissolve completely in him, nor is there reflection on anything apart from the Beloved, as if they were two solitaries in the world, and nothing had existed before them or would exist after them, to such a point that neither the senses nor the sensitive faculties or their objects, or powerful enough to penetrate this intimate solitude, nor cause inquietude in any way or distract the soul by many things, until this intimate introversion, this most attentive occupation with the Beloved, this delightful affection, this amorous union, in short, this veritable transformation of the soul in God, which is the result of a fusion and conversion in the Spirit, declines and finally ends; at which the soul, as if returning from some profound abyss or coming from some high regions, comes to itself, and as if awaking from a profound and sweet sleep of peace and love, is restored to the use of its potencies, is now lord of itself and is able for external occupations.

Bartolomé L. Argensola, concerning F. Jerome of St. Joseph, that he appeared to have been born in Athens.

Alvarez and Baen, commonly so indifferent, said of John of the Conception, "that the praise that this learned (Carmelite) deserves would not fit on many papers. . . . The elegance of his prose and poetry has not had an equal."

Mother Cecilia of the Nativity and Mary of St. Albert are two classical writers of the highest caliber for B. Alonso Cortes. For all this cf. *El Monte Carmelo*, Apr.–Sept., 1949.

— Father Michael of St. Augustine: *Introduction to the interior life and the fruitful practice of the mystical life*, Trat. IV, cap. XXIX, p. 440, Barcelona, 1936.

“Clarity, the first and fundamental condition of a literary work, ordained essentially to delight the spirit by means of beauty, shines unquestionably in the prose of Mother Cecilia,”¹⁶ according to Father Emeterio of Jesus and Mary, one of the best literary critics in the Order at the present time. Mother Cecilia in her book titled *Transformation of the soul in God*, the true completion of the *Dark Night* of St. John of the Cross, very effectively gives us such profound and exact definitions of the mystical phenomena, at the same time so simple and clear, that no woman, with the exception of Teresa of Jesus, has surpassed her in this respect. Let us see how she explains the purification of the faculty of knowing:

It is an admirable thing that that part of the soul which most enlightens has to remain dark and blind in this divine operation. The main reason for this has already been touched on several times; it is caused by the excess of the divine light, which blinds the human understanding. With regard to the ending of these human operations, it must be understood that this blindness is not such that the understanding will always remain blind, but it serves only to change into light and divine knowledge, because while this divine silence lasts, which occurs in the heaven of the soul, it forgets all else with the excess of what it now understands, yet after this onrush of such excessive and strong light, it remains much more enlightened and filled with great wisdom, and having finished with the method of human understanding, it understands in a divine manner now.

— Mother Cecilia of the Nativity: *Transformation of the soul in God*, Canc. VI, pp. 76–77, Burgos, 1952.

There is great value in the many authors of the School who, besides treating of the extraordinary phenomena of grace, also wrote of those which are common and normal with much clarity and clearness and this is worthy of praise. Father Anthony of St. Joachim, Father Mauro of the Child Jesus, and Mother Antonia of Jesus will serve as very good models.

Father Anthony, one of the best prose writers of his century, surpassing even his brother, the noted historian Father Florez, analyzed all the effects of grace in beginners and all the temptations and rules of the purgative state, with such elegance, simplicity, exactness, and richness of language, that it can be compared only with that of Fray Luis of Leon and Malon de Chaide. His counsel

¹⁶ Cf. *El Monte Carmelo*, Apr.–Sept., 1946, pp. 182–183.

on the presence of God is found in a perfect and clear paragraph, where nothing is excessive and nothing is lacking because it is all measured.

He who lives without recollection and meditation, completely oblivious of the fact that he possesses God within his soul, although he professes to live a solitary and religious life and outwardly performs works which in themselves are good, will not gain much merit, nor arrive at the perfection of the life of virtue; rather it is to be feared that he will turn away from the good and end in what is vicious. He who acts to the contrary and spends his life in holy recollection that he always has God with him, will work at everything with rectitude, merit, and perfection, and even amidst bustling events and noisy work where some of his occupations are wont to place him, he will act carefully and in a reparative manner so as not to forget himself and thus be able to recollect himself without any particular loss in the center of his soul, for in this temple all great souls adore their God, and receive those divine influences which raise their works to the highest perfection. — Father Anthony of St. Joachim: *Teresian Instruction*, p. II, cap. VIII, Madrid, 1769.

Father Mauro, one of the most praiseworthy French Carmelites, gives counsels with simplicity, and at the same time with energy, on the danger which confronts those who return to meditation after having reached the prayer of contemplation.

This clear and categorical style reminds us of St. John of the Cross, whom Father Mauro followed with fidelity and interpreted with accuracy even in those most difficult and disputed points.

Those who have reached this high spiritual region by the grace of God who has resurrected them from the dead and taken them out of their nothingness to make them live not with their own life now, but with a life wholly divine, whose beginning is the Holy Spirit, only these, I say should guard themselves from placing any impediment to the divine action by a turning or reflection on themselves. To do this voluntarily would suppose a notable infidelity. For those who are living among the dead, I mean to say those dead to all creatures and living to God, and only in God and God in them, are so far from meditating on themselves and on any created thing so as to rest in it, as non-being is from being. And all their life, their intentions, their actions, their desires, their thoughts, consist in not impeding by any act whatever of their own, the life and dwelling of God in them.

— Father Mauro of the Child Jesus. *The entrance into divine wisdom*, Vol. IV, pp. 92–93, Soignies, 1933.

Father Chrysogonus says of Mother Antonia that her doctrine is the most authentic witness of Carmelite tradition in the eighteenth century and that “her language is like to that of the sublime Reformers.”¹⁷ She left us many examples of her talent and clear-sight-

¹⁷ *Escuela Mistica Carmelitana*, cap. IX, p. 212 (Madrid, 1930).

edness and of the ease that she had in expressing herself, but those passages in which she discovers and reasons out acquired contemplation have a special value because there is none in which we can appreciate better the naturalness, exactitude, and fitness of her words, for in her time as in ours it was the object of discussion and dispute. Few theologians would have given a briefer and simpler reason in defense of this type of contemplation:

As his pure spirit (that of God) is simple, so my vision must conform itself to the object on which I gaze, and I should look at Him with a simple act of faith, and without discourses on what I see and look at; because He is not composed of many parts so that my understanding can travel from one side to the other of the divinity of the Divine Spouse, but He must be contemplated and loved totally in a pure act of faith without interference from the understanding.

—Mother Antonia of Jesus: *Spiritual Edifice*, p. II, c. XIX, ms.

Concerning the literary simplicity of the theologians of the School, which simplicity is born of their Thomistic formation and of their personal experience and their direction of select souls, we could give abundant examples. But so that we shall not deviate from the pattern marked out, we shall limit ourselves to transcribing one paragraph from Father Anthony of the Holy Spirit and another from Father Chrysogonus of the Blessed Sacrament. In both simplicity runs parallel to theological exactitude. Father Anthony writes about divine union and says:

For the understanding of this paragraph I take it as known that union means making two beings become one. And we ask now, how God and the soul can come to be one. Therefore we have to maintain that the soul never loses its being to convert itself in God. This is impossible. God is immutable and nothing can be added to Him. This union does not take place by the presence of God in the soul, because God is present in all things as their natural author. We do not refer to the indwelling of God by grace because He is thus present in all the souls of the just. Charity is not sufficient for this union of which we speak because there are many just souls who do not enjoy contemplation or divine union. Then we must admit that this union takes place in the faculties of the soul, in the understanding and the will. It is actually verified by the union of our will with that of God, or passively by the highest contemplation. The first is called active because all can attain it, the second is called passive because we cannot attain it but God gives it to whom He wills.

—Father Anthony of the Holy Spirit: *Directorium mysticum*, Trat. IV, Disp. I, S, IX, pp. 459–460, Paris, 1904.

The paragraph from Father Chrysogonus concerns Christian perfection and is taken from his *Compendium of Asceticism and*

Mysticism, famous in present-day scientific circles precisely for what we are trying to show: its clarity, simplicity, and depth. "Didactically, it has been said, this work of Father Chrysogonus is one of the most perfect which has come to light in this century."

The supernatural perfection of the soul consists especially in the perfection of its charity, because the perfection of a being consists in its union with its proper end and charity is the union of the soul with its supernatural end which is God.

But, what degree of charity constitutes perfection?

First: it cannot be an absolute perfection of charity, because the perfection of love is measured by the thing loved and not by the faculty that loves. As the object, which in this case is God, has infinite reasons for being loved, a faculty as infinite as its object would be necessary in the soul so that there would be adequation between them and consequently, an absolute perfection of charity. For this reason, this alone exists in God.

Second: it cannot be the last degree of charity, because this does not have a last degree, because as it is a participation in divine charity it does not have an end, since it can always increase. Besides, if we suppose the last degree of charity as constituting perfection, there could not be different degrees of perfection, because these are constituted by the different degrees of charity, and we are supposing that the beginning of perfection is in charity which has already reached its highest degree.

Third: it is not a degree which corresponds to the capacity of your soul, first because the capacity of the soul before receiving grace is not determined or limited of itself to any degree; and secondly, because once grace has been received, it is dispositive of itself, as charity is, that is to say, that one degree disposes the soul to another higher, in such a way that as the soul increases in charity, it has a greater disposition to receive more, resulting in the soul never reaching its capacity, and consequently, perfection possible to attain would not exist. It is therefore not the capacity of the soul which determines the degree of charity which constitutes perfection.

Fourth: if that grade of charity which determines perfection is not determined by the nature of charity nor by its relation to the object, nor by its relation to the subject, it is necessary to revert to God, who is its cause. The free will of God is that which determines the degree of charity necessary for the perfection of the soul.

—Father Chrysogonus de J. Sacramentado: *Compendium of Asceticism and Mysticism*. P. I, c. III, art. I, pp. 45-46, Madrid, 1946.

All of the motives which these two theologians, and the group which they represent, had for being clear and transparent in their expressions, are also had by those authors of our School who, besides living a life of prayer and assiduous study of Thomism, excelled — or do excel — in a knowledge of psychology.

We shall represent this numerous minority with a text from Father Michael de la Fuente and another from Father Marie Eugene of the Child Jesus.

The first, author of the book entitled *The Three Lives of Man*, which Menendez and Pelayo rated as the best work in mystical psychology written in Spanish, describes thus the prayer of quiet:

This way of the prayer of quiet is marvelous, and of the most abundant fruit for the soul, if it is exercised as it should be. It consists, essentially, according to the doctrine of the saints, in the interior silence of the sensitive and rational faculties of the soul, which cease to operate, and are suspended; looking only at God by means of the intelligence as He is in the most intimate and most secret part of the soul, and hearing with greatest attention that which He says, commands or teaches interiorly. The saints call this type of prayer that of intimate quiet, because the speech of the soul is the moving of the discursive understanding from one thing to another with diverse considerations, and when it leaves off the discourse, then we say that it is suspended and listens attentively, as one who listens with rapt attention to another who is speaking so as not to miss a word of what is being said. Thus in this interior quiet all the faculties are suspended, both sensitive and rational, and only the understanding attends and looks at God with a tranquil gaze, and without clamor from the senses or discourse from the reason; because if this quiet is to be perfect, there should not be any exterior words, nor should any sensible feeling be experienced in the most interior part of the soul, nor intelligible by reason; it is only the understanding, alone and naked, which looks at God, without attending then to any other thing.

— Father Michael de la Fuente: *The three lives of man*, Libro III, cap. X, pp. 457–458, Barcelona, 1887.

Psychological reorientation, born of the night of the spirit, is analyzed in the following lines, full of beauty and free from all affectation, taken from Father Marie Eugene. This description is worthy of an anthology of mystical literature because of its subject matter and its depth. Deservedly, Father Eugene figures as one of the outstanding spiritual writers in the Order today.

The soul now receives light and movement only from God; of the two contrary currents, coming one from the outside the other from within, which existed at the beginning of the mystical life, there is now only the latter. Compared to the normal psychological life of man, this new state causes a veritable reorientation of the soul to appear. It is no longer turned toward the senses, its windows open on the external world, there to find its food. It is attentive solely to God, the living fountain springing up in its depths and as it were beyond itself. Independent of the senses, the soul thus finds itself free from everything in them that vitiated its spiritual operation. Sense tendencies and psychoses cannot directly touch the soul itself nor the spiritual faculties; they can create organic troubles only in the senses where they are seated. As long as the soul uses the senses as receptors and instruments of action, its spiritual activity is burdened with all that encumbers them. The liberation from them that the psychological reorientation procures is a liberation from all the troubles that affect them and from the consequent functional disorders of spiritual activity. It successfully brings to completion the moral

purification, and, by submitting the soul to God alone, gives the soul "its health—its health being God himself."

—Father Marie Eugene of the Child Jesus: *I am a Daughter of the Church*, Part V, chap. VI, p. 483, Chicago, 1955.

Vigor and Color

These literary qualities are not in contrast to variety and individualism. Color and vigor admit within themselves an almost infinite gamut of manifestations which respect the personality of the author.

It is wonderful to review the mystics of the Order and observe how they preserve their human values intact in spite of the firmness, the energy, and the correctness (of language) with which they are expressed.

These writers defend a doctrine with which they are enamored and of which they are certain because it rests on the supreme Truth, and they do not hesitate to reassert their beliefs. Some do it serenely, others tenderly, others brilliantly; but all do it with strength, energy, certainty, and clarity. It is a repetition, with its consequent deductions, of biblical literature, where all the hagiographers have left an example of their style, which in some is solemn, as the author of *Paralipomenos*, idyllic, as in that of the *Canticles*, ingenious, as that of *Daniel*; but in all it is robust, because it is the offspring of those who were conscious of the certainty and the infallibility which they enjoyed. Both this serious vigor and that eloquent prose which spills out like a cascading torrent, is always the same: firm, decisive, and compact.

This aesthetic quality becomes more outstanding in these books of the School which treat of extraordinary phenomena. In the descriptions of the mystical states, in spite of the fact that there are difficulties which seem insurmountable, one is accustomed to find beautiful metaphors, symbols, and allegories which are the lexicon of psychological analysis. Sometimes one finds sublime contradictions as when they speak of "blissful folly," of "divine folly," of the "ray of darkness," of the "understanding not understanding."

Other times an unsuspected strength is given to a phrase by the use of an intentional cacaphony, as when they write of "determined determination," "courageous valor," and "dark obscurity."

Finally, other times they resort to the use of reticences and mental concordances, to the use of superlatives and of diverse figures of speech so as to be able by a broad sweep of the pen to shape their ideas.

* * *

St. Teresa gives us an example of all this when she describes the flight of the soul and the imaginative vision.¹⁸ To the brilliance of this picture she unites simplicity, elegance, and tenderness. Her style is not limited to the normal use of literary discourse, but is a spring which has its source in the profound depths of her soul.

To return to this sudden rapture of the spirit. The soul really appears to have quitted the body, which however is not lifeless, and though, on the other hand, the person is certainly not dead, yet she herself cannot, for a few seconds, tell whether her spirit remains within her body or not. She feels that she has been wholly transported into another and a very different region from that in which we live, where a light so unearthly is shown that, if during her whole lifetime she had been trying to picture it and the wonders seen, she could not possibly have succeeded. In an instant her mind learns so many things at once that if the imagination and intellect spent years in striving to enumerate them, it could not recall a thousandth part of them. This vision is not intellectual but imaginary and is seen by the eyes of the soul more clearly than earthly things are seen by our bodily eyes. Although no words are pronounced, the spirit is taught many truths; for instance, if it beholds any of the saints, it knows them at once as well as if intimately acquainted with them for years.

— St. Teresa of Jesus: *Interior Castle*, VI, Chap. 5, No. 8–9, pp. 202–203, London, 1921.

The prose of Mother Teresa of Jesus and Mary (Piñeda) is strong and virile, to such an extent that when she describes those ineffable states she can be compared only with Jeremias, whom she so often read, and admired as a literary model. The fiery, exuberant, and ardent imagination of the oriental hagiographer was born anew in this Carmelite who is an outstanding figure among our great classical writers.¹⁹

Thy divine perfections are immense and lofty rivers, and entering into them, I feel huge waves rise up and they sound like voices because of the great multitude of waters, and in the admirable raising of those divine seas and rivers, presently I sink to the depths, because there is no created understanding which can navigate

¹⁸ *Ideas Esteticas*, tomo II, p. 113 (CSIC, 1947).

¹⁹ Serrano Sanz says of her "that because of her brilliant style — many times not inferior to that of Fray Luis de Granada — she is the most notable mystical writer of the 17th century." Prologue to the works of M. Teresa of Jesus and Mary Piñeda (Madrid, 1921).

there, and so I let myself be submerged rejoicing exceedingly to see thy infinite fortitude.

—Mother Teresa of Jesus and Mary (Piñeda), O.C., *Treatise on a brief relation . . .*, VIII, p. 112, Madrid, 1921.

The paragraphs in which our authors explain the phenomena of the ordinary interior life are usually less brilliant. The subject matter lends itself to less literary plasticity, to less vigor of expression. Nevertheless there are still abundant pages from which to choose examples of eminently artistic prose, of compositions based on the essential images of preachers and vivid allegories which give strength and solidity to what is being analyzed.

The explanation of the *Dark Night of the Soul* in St. John of the Cross is one example among many which could be transcribed:

The privation of all pleasure to the desire in all things is here called night. For as night is nothing else but the absence of light, and consequently, of visible objects, whereby the faculty of vision remains in darkness unemployed, so the mortification of the desires is as night to the soul. For when the soul denies itself those pleasures which outward things furnish to the desire, it is as it were in darkness, without occupation. As the faculty of vision is nourished by light and fed by visible objects, and ceases to be so fed when the light is withdrawn, so the soul by means of the desire feeds on those things which, corresponding with its powers, give it pleasure; but when the desire is mortified, it derives no more pleasure from them, and thus, so far as the desire is concerned, the soul abides in darkness, without occupation.

—St. John of the Cross: *Ascent*, Book I, chap. III, p. 13, London, 1906.

Father Eugene of St. Joseph is another example of theological precision. He is clear, salient, facile, and rich in comparisons and similes which leave no opportunity or place for doubt, or for criticism. He is eminent and trustworthy in the scientific field and decisive and solid in the literary field.

Now certainly, the closer we come to the center, so much the more does this center illumine us by its light. Concerning the center we are at the same time *active* and *passive*: active because *we are traveling* towards it: passive because from it *we receive* the light with its consequent effects. To go towards the center is to work *actively*, it is to climb the slope of Mount Carmel; it is the *active* which St. John of the Cross means by working, struggling, laboring, purifying, emptying, putting in practice. . . . And the more active we are, the more passive. The more quickly we near the center, so much the more strongly will we feel the effects of its light, whose waves now affect us with an increasing intensity. . . . The proportion between the mysterious illumination of faith, and our purifying efforts is exactly the same, we would almost say mathematical.

—Magazine *Mount Carmel*: "The Contemplation of Faith," No. 543, pp. 358–359, Burgos, 1928.

The prose of Mother Amada of Jesus is a prodigious case of compact and constructive prose in which there is nothing over and nothing lacking, because all is calculated, and in which those most intimate secrets locked in the human heart are told with clarity, with authority, with an almost sculptured solidity, and at the same time this prose is full of beauty, agility, and passion which inspires love in all who read it. She has the energy and color of the short phrase of Martinez Ruiz; but it has infinite depth, a depth which many of our prose writers would like to call their own.

If the tongue is speechless, if the senses are quiet, the imagination, the memory, the creatures are quiet and produce solitude, if there is nothing around, at least in the most intimate part of this soul of the spouse, the heart will make very little noise. Silence of the feelings of aversion, silence of the desire of what is too passionate, silence of zeal which sounds of indiscretion, silence of fervor in what is exaggerated, silence even in sighs . . . silence of love in that which is too excited, not in that holy exaltation of which God is the author, but of that in which nature is mixed. The silence of love is the love of silence. . . . It is silence before God, beauty, bounty, perfection. . . . It is silence which has nothing restrained or compulsive about it; this silence does not impede the tenderness nor the strength of this love, as the confession of faults does not impede the silence of humility, nor the movement of the wings of the angels, of which the Prophet speaks, impede the silence of their obedience.

— Sister Mary Amada of Jesus: *The twelve degrees of silence*, Sixth silence, p. 7, Vitoria, 1945.

The qualities which engender literary vigor and color produce a discriminating spirit. There are authors who besides accumulating appropriate metaphors, full of substance and zest, also embellish their works with unusual images chosen with a certain delight and ability and they compose their books with all the beauty they find. Perhaps this wide judgment of giving room to all that has importance, all that has value, has as much merit as originality and literary singularity, which is nearly always dangerous and displeasing. An example of all this is offered us by Father John of the Assumption, one of our less known and studied mystic writers:

Death came up the windows and entered our houses, says Jeremias. *Ascendit mors per fenestras nostras et ingressa est domos nostras*. And truly then does death come up through the windows and enter our house (says St. Jerome) when covetousness, which enters the soul through the bodily senses, enters the house of the understanding. And that whoever looks outwardly through the windows of the senses incautiously, many times, in spite of himself will be carried away and taken as if by force to the delight of sin, and subjugated by his desire, begins to desire that which before he did not desire. Because the soul is so quick that if it is not warned

so that it will not indiscreetly see that which it is not possible for it to desire will blindly come to desire that which it has seen.

—Father John of the Assumption: *Pastor of Mount Carmel* (Commentary on the Precautions): Precautions against the flesh, refl. 37, p. 502, Madrid, 1729.

Another example is offered us by Francis of St. Thomas, a most ponderous, methodical, and clear writer of the School, and one of the best dialectics of his century.

And this so great enjoyment of the soul is diffused and communicated to the rest of the faculties which work through it, as they are in turn the faculties of the body, according to their capacity. That is why the saint says that the soul explains well the mercies of God by saying: "*Of my Beloved have I drunk*," because as the drink is diffused and spread throughout the members and veins of the body, so this communication of God is diffused substantially in all of the soul. And principally it is found in the faculties of the soul: memory, understanding and will which are the ones that immediately perceive these lights and influences; in the understanding it drinks wisdom and knowledge; in the will it drinks the sweetest love and through the memory it drinks refreshment and delight in the thought and sense of its bliss; which the saint proves then by quotations from Scripture.

—Father Francis of St. Thomas: *Medula Mistica*, T. V, chap. IV, p. 280, Madrid, 1695.

There has been no paucity of authors in the Order who have given life and strong meaning to their teachings by means of grandiloquence, impressiveness, long and erudite phrases, etc., very much on the style of Fray Luis de Granada, Fray Juan of the Angels, and of Domingo de Valtanas. Father John Anthony of St. Albert, Archbishop of La Plata, and one of the most dynamic missionaries which the Reform has had, used these methods to impress his readers. His prose, forceful and flourishing, is vigorous and robust as that of the authors which are most outstanding in this respect.

All things in the world alter and change. The highest mountains, the most magnificent buildings, the most ancient lineages, the most noble states, the most promising kingdoms, all suffer alteration and change with time. Those who rule today will find themselves subject tomorrow, those who are poor today, will be rich tomorrow; those who are happy and healthy today, will find themselves sad and infirm tomorrow, those who live today, will die tomorrow. One generation passes and another comes; one day brings another day, another night brings another night; and finally all the things of the world, good and bad, pleasures and sorrows, alleviations and weariness, are suffering a thousand changes; and while all are changed or altered; only the eternity of the sufferings of the one who is condemned will never undergo change or alteration.

—Ilmo. Sr. D. Fr. Jose Antonio de San Alberto: *Voces del Pastor en el retiro*, 12, pp. 94-95, Burgos, 1906.

In the same way, there are not lacking those who have followed the opposite path, even to the point of exaggeration: the short phrase in the form of a sentence, as can be seen by the following paragraph from Father Dominic of Jesus and Mary, the confidant of Popes and kings.

The true peace of the soul is the dwelling place of God. God so loves peace that He is called the God of peace. Christ was born in a time of peace, and in the quiet of night, so that you would see that if He is to be born in your soul, it is necessary that there be peace there. God wished that Solomon a peaceful king would build the temple and not David, who was a warrior king, thus the peaceful soul builds within itself a house for God. As one can see nothing in turbulent water, so it is impossible to delight in God in an unquiet heart. One cannot drink muddy water; in the same way the works which proceed from a disturbed soul are not very pleasing to the Lord.

— Father Dominic of Jesus and Mary: *Sentenciario Espiritual*, Via iluminativa, cap. VII, P. V, p. 98, Ms. Archivo Silveriano, Burgos.

Rhythm and Poetry

It is not our intention to speak here of those poets of our Order, with whom, such eminent critics as Menendez and Pelayo, Juan Valera, Serrano Sanz, Blanca Alonso Cortes, have largely occupied themselves. Our intention is merely to reaffirm, since what we are going to say is nothing new, that nearly all our great spiritual authors have been poets and have composed exquisite verses, full of expression and harmony, which are more or less faithful exponents of their longings and anxieties.

The majority of our mystical authors were not poets by temperament, by natural idiosyncrasy, or by the exigency of love. Their strophes are born of their supernatural love. They are children of a special psychological state, of a transformation in the divine, of a total denial of themselves.

From this we can deduce that the major difference which exists between the born poet and the poet made on the basis of love, the mystical poet, is that the theme of the former is ecumenical; he sings of everything, in an autonomous manner, he sings of creatures considered in themselves; while the mystical poet sings only to Love, and when he fits created beings into his verses he puts them in because of his love for God, as parts which make a whole, whose beginning and last end is the Creator,

BOOK REVIEWS

IL SENSO TEOLOGICO DELLA LITURGIA (*LITURGICAL THEOLOGY*): SAGIO DI LITURGIA TEOLOGICA PASTORALE, by Cyprian Vagaggini, O.S.B., Ed. Paoline, Rome, 1957, 746 pp.

The author of this work is already so well known internationally because of his outstanding liturgical culture that there is no need of introducing him to the reader. It is sufficient to say that he is the successor of Father Stoltz in the chair of theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm, Rome, and professor of liturgy in the Roman Institute, *Regina Mundi*.

In order to better classify his work in the contemporary liturgical movement, it might be well to recall the three principal phases this movement has undergone in the present century.

Fifty years ago, the science of liturgy was essentially the study of ceremonies of the public worship of the Church and of the Church rules that governed its function. In this sense, the science of liturgy was a part of canon law in which theological and pastoral thought was limited to the laws and rubrics of cult or worship. This period may be called *rubrical*.

This epoch was followed thirty years ago by a reaction in a twofold direction: on the one hand, in liturgical tracts not only were ceremonies studied but also the facts and liturgical rites, their formation, books, places of worship, the altar, sacred vessels, liturgical designs, and even Gregorian Chant; not only were there studies of the Mass, the breviary, sacraments, and sacramentals, but even of the feasts or the liturgical year. On the other hand, all these were studied in tracts that were eminently historical: the origin, and evolution of all the elements that integrate the liturgy. This was the *historical* period.

Today, the liturgical movement without omitting historical investigations, is orientated in a threefold direction:

a) *Ascetical Direction*: that is attempting to gather into the study of liturgy, the fruits of doctrine and fermentation in the spiritual life;

b) *Pastoral Direction*: that is preoccupied with the means that are most adapted to help the faithful live a liturgical life;

c) *Theological Direction*: that treats of deepening the liturgy under the light of the final synthesis of theological thought, and which constitutes the object of the liturgy that is called theological.

Now the work of Vagaggini that we are reviewing follows this last mentioned direction, which permits us to situate it in a field that is well defined and thus can be more easily judged by us. It is the most complete and the most profound work of its kind that has been published in these past years. This is the first tribute that the author deserves and we are happy to praise him in the name of all the lovers of the liturgy.

The purpose of the work is to trace a synthetical vision of the liturgy and theology that will help us see the precise place of the liturgy in the general economy of salvation according to Christian revelation and according to the general laws that govern this economy and its relations to the Bible: faith, theology, the spiritual and pastoral life (cf. Preface, p. 13).

Someone might say that a vision whose synthetic exposition requires 746 pages could hardly be called synthetic especially since it covers so many condensed pages. But it must be kept in mind that the field of his investigation is most extensive, as can be seen from a simple perusal of the Table of Contents:

- I. Concept of the Liturgy (ch. I-V, pp. 15-147)
- II. Liturgy and the General Rules of the Divine Economy in Salvation (ch. VI-XIII, pp. 149-349)
- III. Liturgy and the Bible (ch. XIV-XV, pp. 351-393)
- IV. Liturgy, Faith, Theology (ch. XVI-XX, pp. 395-511)
- V. Liturgy and Spiritual Life (cf. XXI-XXII, pp. 613-642) and Pastoral (ch. XXIII-XXIV, pp. 643-743)

The work seems to be a fundamental study of the first order and hence should merit a review that is more ample than the one we are able to give here. But because of the short space that we are allotted, we shall limit ourselves to a few observations on the fifth part in so far as it refers to the spiritual life, since this will hold greater interest for the readers of SPIRITUAL LIFE.

* * *

If we have not misunderstood the author's thought, he attempts to prove his thesis that *liturgical spirituality* is no longer a method of spirituality — alongside those that are traditionally admitted and approved by the Church, e.g., Benedictine, Carmelite, Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuitical, Salesian, Berullian, etc. — but *the official and universal method of the Catholic Church*, proposed as such by the magisterium of the Church, especially in the Encyclical, *Mediator Dei* (cf. pp. 539-540). The author's intention is to prove this thesis. His effort is both conscientious and complete (pp. 513-642), proposed with

scientific seriousness and with prejudice, without polemical or apologetical pretensions that might vitiate the value of his argument.

Did the author obtain his desired end? We would not dare to affirm or deny this. We believe, however, that the thesis is difficult and admits of an ample interchange of ideas. Here I shall limit myself to affirm a few obscure points that, in spite of my good will, I cannot clearly see.

1. We agree with Father Vagaggini when he affirms that "spirituality as a doctrine is the doctrine of the manner of arriving at the most perfect union with God here below" (ch. XXI, p. 615), and that "it is something more than a doctrine of the Christian life that limits itself to the manner of obtaining preserving sanctifying grace which is indispensable for salvation, in so far as spirituality, supposing this actual Christian life, is occupied only with the tendency to perfection of the Christian in life" (cf. *ibid.*).

2. Likewise we are in accord with his distinction of a life that is habitually ascetical and a life that is habitually mystical, so traditional in the Carmelite mystical school, although this is not admitted by other schools (cf. ch. XXI, pp. 517, 518, 525).

3. I also believe that all will admit his distinction of the common elements of all Catholic spirituality: (a) *In regard to the end*: the *absolute* and last end of all: the glory of God; the *specific* last end of all spirituality: to approach the perfection of Christian being and work of God; (b) *in regard to the means*: (1) common and necessary for all: state of grace, observance of the commandments of God and of the Church (among these last, the Sunday Mass, Confession, and Communion for Paschal time, sacraments, etc.), spirit of prayer and mortification, exercise of the virtues, examination of conscience, duties of one's state in life, etc.; (2) special and not necessary for all: all the afore-mentioned but in their greater or lesser *concretization*, which opens a vast field for the different schools or methods of spirituality: frequency and method of the use of the Sacraments; frequency and method of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, exercise of the liturgy, preference for this or that virtue or exercise of perfection, etc. (cf. *ibid.*, p. 525 and following).

4. According to this distinction that is of capital importance it means that in the first sense every school of spirituality must be necessarily liturgical, because being Catholic it cannot prescind from the laws of the Church that prescribe choir recitation of the Office, Conventual Mass, use of the sacraments, and so forth. The author affirms explicitly that the Benedictine School of Spirituality is a determined type of liturgical spirituality, but it is not identified with *the* liturgical spirituality

(*ibid.*, p. 544). The same can be affirmed more or less of the other traditional schools of spirituality, especially of the great Mendicant Orders in whose legislation the Divine Office (chorally recited) is prescribed, daily Conventual Mass, the administration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, as can be seen from a perusal of their respective constitutions, ordinals, ceremonials, manuals, rituals, and other liturgical books.

5. In this same sense, it can be affirmed that the saints who arrived at the highest degrees of sanctity and who founded or exemplified the different methods of spirituality, have lived and practiced in a greater or lesser degree this liturgical spirituality, necessary and obligatory for all by ecclesiastical law. Of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross—the two principal saints of Catholic Mysticism—the author opportunely holds, as before him it was held by R. Hoernaert, that they are perfectly faithful to the spirit of the liturgy of the Church.¹

6. Having established all this, Father Vagaggini goes a step further and proposes the definition and characteristics of liturgical spirituality that he calls "*official and universal of the Church.*" This is how he would formulate his definition: "Liturgical spirituality is that spirituality in which the specific *concretization* and the relative synthetic ordination proper to the diverse elements common to all Catholic spirituality is determined by the same liturgy as a means toward Christian perfection" (cf. *ibid.*, p. 626). In regard to the characteristics he underscores the following: (a) *common means*: necessary for all; (b) *specific means*: proper to liturgical spirituality: "it is simply that the specific *concretization* and the relative synthetic ordination of the common means are determined by the liturgy itself, whether in the liturgical action or outside of it" (cf. p. 627).

7. And here arises the first difficulty that we are not able to solve. In the first place, who is the author of this *specific concretization and synthetic ordination* in regard to the common means? The Church? The liturgy itself? Or the excellent theologian, Father Vagaggini? In the first case, we have that which the author intends to prove; that is, a method of spirituality that is official and universal in the Church. But,

¹ Cf. "Liturgie ou Contemplation": *Etudes Carmelitaines*, 17 (1932), v. 1, pp. 177–215. The author confesses that unfortunately he was not able to read this study (cf. *ibid.*, p. 571, note 53). We have read it attentively and can affirm that it is in accord with his fundamental affirmation (which is a proof of his scientific seriousness, thanks to which both studies have come to the same conclusion independently one of the other) since the expression of his works that seem to oppose the liturgical spirit—especially St. John of the Cross—refer rather to abuses and superstitions than to the liturgy itself. Cf. p. 5.

if he who elaborates this specific *concretization* is the author then we have only one more method of spirituality that we might call "*the liturgical spirituality of Father Vagaggini*."

8. We would like to clarify a little more this conclusion which is inevitable for whoever attentively reads this book. That the magisterium of the Church is daily insisting more and more on the excellence and pre-eminence of the liturgy (as the official public prayer of the Church) above the particular prayers and devotions is an evident fact; and the beautiful encyclical *Mediator Dei*, in a marvelous manner, has demonstrated and expounded the rich potentialities and sanctifying efficacy of the same doctrine. And this, as all admit, is a common and necessary means of any Catholic spirituality. But has the magisterium pretended to expound the *concretization* and specific ordinance of which the author speaks as a specific means of liturgical spirituality? In such a case there would be no doubt that this liturgical spirituality would be the universal and official method of spirituality of the Church and in consequence there would be no need of insisting on other methods whose reason of existing does not depend so much on the sanctity of the persons who introduced or exemplified them, but rather, on the approval of the magisterium of the Church, the unique authority of competence in this matter. We believe nevertheless that the texts of the *Mediator Dei* that the author cites so abundantly demonstrate the opposite of what Father Vagaggini intends to prove, i.e., they demonstrate that this liturgical spirit is a common and necessary means of all schools of spirituality. That a good theologian can deduce from these principles a specific *concretization* is very admissible. And this we believe is the principal merit of the author whom we sincerely congratulate. The book is being translated by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn.

Father Otilio, O.C.D., Washington, D. C.

PRAYER IN PRACTICE, by Romano Guardini, Pantheon:
New York, 1957, 228 pp., \$3.50

So many people think that religion is a dull, drab, and onerous thing. One cannot blame them: they fulfill all the obligations and miss the joy of religion. They are to be admired and pitied at the same time. At the bottom of this maladjustment is a complete misunderstanding of prayer. Since prayer is, by definition, the activity of religion, a false notion of it would constitute a focal defection, and would necessarily have pernicious effect upon one's whole religious attitude.

That is why there is something better about one good book on prayer

than a whole shelf of theological textbooks. Good books have been written before on prayer, but there is something distinctive about Romano Guardini's *Prayer in Practice*. It is as practical as any other with the possible exception of Father P. T. Rohrbach's *Conversation with Christ*, and at the same time, deeper, more searching, more inspiring. What Monsignor Guardini does so eminently is give you brand new, clear, and profound *attitudes* of prayer and about prayer.

His first chapter is on preparation because the author believes that prayer, which is always an act of religious worship, will be as good as the preparation for it. What this preparation aims to do and how it should be undertaken can be examined under various headings; above all, under the heading of "collectedness." By collecting oneself he means to overcome unrest and be still; to free oneself of everything which is irrelevant, and to hold oneself at the disposal of God, who alone matters now. To be collected means to be gathered together, united, to have a fixed center, like the hub of a wheel. A distracted man lacks poise and unity. To collect oneself is to awaken. It opens the door to prayer: God is here. And here am I.

"The first step into prayer is self-recollection. The second is visualizing (before the inner eye) God's reality. The third is seeking His holy face. In this way the worshiper tries to establish, or rather to give expression and effect to the "I – Thou" relationship with God which is man's birthright. God (to whom I speak in prayer) knows me not merely as one among countless others, but as "myself" in the uniqueness and irreplaceableness of my person. Though I may be as nothing in His sight, yet it has pleased Him to call me and to establish a relationship in which I am alone with Him. Into the mystery of love one enters through prayer."

At the end of this chapter the author suggests that the forms of prayer ought to be governed by the natural rhythm of life, the normal routine and events of everyday life. And he begs for more sensitivity and inventiveness. Prayer should not always be restricted to the self-same thoughts and words while life passes on in all its diversity.

In the condition of collectedness we become aware of the reality of God. This reality evokes a human response which comprises the different forms of prayer. Guardini calls these the basic acts of prayer. His chapter on these acts is full of beauty, insight, and mystery. It is God who takes the initiative in prayer. Our response is evoked by certain revealed aspects of His being: His holiness, majesty, bountiful love. And so there is adoration and repentance, yearning and praise, thanksgiving and communion, petition and reverence; and they are

all interconnected. They are but different aspects of the living relationship of man to God, made possible because God reveals Himself to man and calls him.

The manner in which we speak to different people varies greatly, and so Msgr. Guardini explains, in one chapter, the specific kinds of response due the distinct persons of the Trinity.

His comments on oral prayer are illuminating and may offer a solution or two even to old-timers (proficients). It is refreshing to find a liturgist — perhaps the most eminent of them all — teaching us how to use the liturgy and “the established texts” to sustain our private, personal communion with God; and assuring us that “the most vital prayer is the one that springs unprompted from the heart; it has no difficulty finding its own appropriate language. Indeed, we may say that the spontaneous expression of repentance or yearning, adoration or joy, supplication or thanksgiving, is the prime language of prayer.”

There is a chapter on mental prayer entitled: “Inward or Contemplative Prayer.” This also involves a brief, practical treatment of mystical prayer.

Anyone acquainted with Romano Guardini’s previous works, such as *The Living God* and *The Faith and Modern Man*, must know how favorite a subject Divine Providence is. Well, it is here, too: just as probing, and revealing as ever. Take this, for instance: “Providence presents to the individual in the form of an over-all situation the people, conditions, and circumstances which are important to him at that moment, and demands of him that he should act not on an abstract principle nor, on the other hand, with subjective arbitrariness, but in accordance with the demands inherent in the situation itself.”

The final chapter of the book is on the over-all pattern of Christian prayer life. The Italian-German writer asserts that the whole book is about personal prayer which is only one thread in the whole pattern of Christian devotion. He then outlines this greater design. It is an eloquent expression of profound penetration and theological balance. It establishes the essential unity of prayer. It would be an incalculable blessing if liturgists and contemplatives would brood over this chapter, meditate on it, discuss it.

The last page of a book is always interesting. Here is the last of *Prayer in Practice*: “The religious life of a parish in which the liturgy does not play its proper role and which therefore draws its nourishment mainly from popular devotion must inevitably be impoverished.”

All this should not make us forget the other side of the picture. There is a form of liturgical zeal which looks upon all popular devotion as

inferior or at least superfluous. It springs from the same attitude which regards personal prayer as a mere encroachment on the liturgy. This is a wrong and dangerous point of view. In its own way it resembles the attitude of the person who says: "All that is necessary is humanity as a whole. There is no need for a people. I am content with the world, I do not need a homeland." Popular devotion is to religious life what the link with people and family, country and home, is to the natural life. A good afternoon service worthily and piously performed, a Rosary in the evening said in the proper spirit are beautiful, profound, and intimate — something which the Christian mind needs to remain healthy.

Father William, O.C.D., Milwaukee, Wis.

THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, by Jules Lebreton, S.J., translated from the French, Macmillan, New York, 1957, 888 pp., \$7.00

The Gospels are our chief source for the life of Jesus and for this source there is no substitute. They show us the Son of God as He walked among men; they give us His sacred teaching; they tell us of His salvific death; but they are not biographies in the modern sense of the word. St. Matthew portrays the Messiah foretold by the prophets and the establishment of His Kingdom. St. Mark (according to an early Christian author) was "the interpreter of Peter. He wrote accurately but not in order all the Saviour's words and works which he could remember." St. Luke (according to the statement in the opening verses of his Gospel) was not an eyewitness of the facts he relates but he has collected these facts from eyewitnesses and has made a careful study of all these events from the beginning. St. John is selective in his choice of incidents that show that Christ is the Son of God, the light and life of men.

The need for, and the advantage of, a synthesis of these four narratives is obvious and since Tatian's effort in the second century many single narratives have been fashioned. These "harmonies" have a simplicity and a value all their own. For many centuries they sufficed. In their smoothly integrated passages souls in prayer could study Christ's words and deeds, undistracted by questions of chronology and topography. Yet fashions change. Our age asks for full length lives of Christ constructed according to rules of scholarly criticism. One of the best of these studies is *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ* by Jules Lebreton, S.J. The material for this book was first presented in a series of lectures given at the *Institut Catholique* over a period of ten years. The

audience consisted of young people who needed no "demonstration of the truth along apostolic lines." They wished "to gain a closer knowledge of their Master, as revealed in His life and teaching, in the training of His Apostles, and the foundation of His Church." To give his teaching a vivid and accurate background, Lebreton visited Palestine and he never fails to communicate to his readers the emotion he there experienced; his descriptions provide an unforgettable sense of immediacy and drama.

Lebreton follows the chronology of Christ's public life worked out by Lagrange and he allows a public ministry of a little more than two years. This period includes three Passovers and on the third Jesus died. The date was the fourteenth Nisan: the year was A.D. 30. The Last Supper, Lebreton concludes, took place on Thursday. He gives his reasons clearly and cogently, but, writing in 1930, he could not evaluate opinions offered by scholars writing on this subject since then or the data supplied by archaeologists, notably from the Qumran caves. This is the book's inescapable weakness. A new generation of writers has appeared since Lebreton prepared his great masterpiece and there is much in their work that he might have wished to incorporate in his own pages. But in every other respect this is a magnificent book, one rightly regarded by many discerning critics as the finest life of Christ and admirably suited for the author's purpose which he expresses in the words of St. John: "That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

Mother Kathryn Sullivan, R.S.C.J.

THE WORD OF SALVATION: A COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPELS. Vol. I. St. Matthew and St. Mark, by Albert Durand, S.J., and Joseph Huby, S.J., 968 pp., \$12.50. Vol. II. St. Luke and St. John, by Albert Valensin, S.J., Joseph Huby, S.J., and Albert Durand, S.J., 1016 pp., \$14.00. Translated by John J. Heenan, S.J., The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1957.

A valuable series of pleasant and solid scholarship — the *Verbum Salutis* — has done much to popularize the study of the Bible among French-speaking Catholics. Nothing comparable to these delightful volumes has been produced in this country so it is a pleasure to welcome the smoothly competent translation Father Heenan has given us of the commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew, by Father Durand, and

on the Gospel of St. Mark by Father Huby. In giving us these books, Father Heenan has placed us very much in his debt.

These commentaries are scholarly yet free from pedantry. The treatment of technical points is skillful and unobtrusive. Quotations from the Fathers reveal, not only the hidden beauties of the sacred text, but the richness of our century-old traditions. Written more than a quarter of a century ago, it is a tribute to the authors that their work can be recommended so wholeheartedly. Recent research might suggest certain minor modifications but the simplicity and profundity of these two beautiful studies will enable all those who wish to grow in their love for "the Fairest of the sons of men" to profit by a prayerful study of *The Word of Salvation*.

Volume two contains the Gospels of Luke and John. Here is to be found the same high level of scholarship, the same thought-provoking commentary. Luke's Gospel is presented with simplicity and beauty. There is ample evidence to justify the titles so frequently attributed to the work of this evangelist: "the Gospel of the Savior," "the Gospel of Our Lady," the Gospel of the Disciples," "the Gospel of the Holy Women," "the Gospel of Prayer." The whole narrative is rich in its insights about the universality of salvation. To many readers the commentary on John's Gospel will seem to contain the most rewarding chapters of the two volumes. The author dwells lovingly on the words and the miracles with which Christ substantiated His claim that He is the light and the life of the world. May these two volumes bring to many souls the life and the light that is to be found here in such abundance.

Mother Kathryn Sullivan, R.S.C.J., Manhattanville College, N. Y.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PASSION, by Rev. Charles Hugo Doyle, The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1957, 93 pp., \$1.85

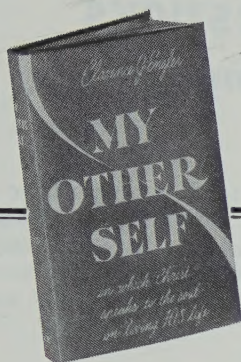
This is a book written for the "would be but always too busy" contemplative. It is a series of short, very short meditations, one for each day in Lent. Most are studies of some minute detail of the Passion. Because of the extent to which Father Doyle delves into the Passion, one is given fresh insights into the characters and temperaments of the people who played a part in the sufferings of Christ: Judas, St. Peter, St. Mark, the two high priests, and Pilate. Such descriptive portrayals of both people and scenes help to bring them to life and give color and

meaning to the person inexperienced in meditation. Each reflection ends with a practical application to everyday living.

Father Doyle examines certain parts of the Passion closely, especially the Agony in the Garden, the meditations on which take one through three weeks of Lent. He also deals at some length with the trials before Annas and Caiphas so that at the end he is pressed for time and ends with only one meditation on the Crucifixion itself. The book leaves one hoping that he will write another, like to this one, on the later parts of the Passion.

This is a good book for beginners to use for meditation; the reflections are brief, but thought provoking, simple in style without the more orthodox steps of meditation which might deter the neophyte. Father Doyle by his own graphic delineation of scenes helps the reader to a composition of place and time. This book could well make the Passion truly meaningful if every morning one read the meditation for the day. A thoughtful reading would take no more than five minutes each day, but if done seriously would be enough impetus for a prayerful Lent. And when Lent is over, the person should be on the way to real meditation, because the book shows, without having made a point of doing so, how to ferret out the meaning behind Scripture. All in all, it is worth a try this Lent.

Mary Ann Beattie, Grosse Pointe, Mich.



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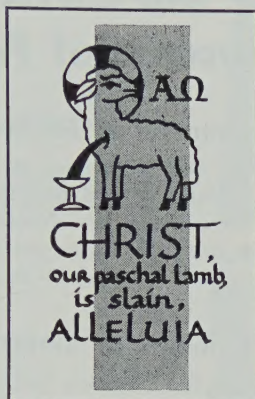
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- Pentecost
- Christmas

FOR ALL RELIGIOUS OCCASIONS:

- Birth
- Baptism
- Confirmation
- First Communion
- Matrimony
- Ordination
- Graduation
- Religious Profession
- Sickness and Death
- Mass Offerings

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CONCEPTION ABBEY PRESS
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TWO IMPORTANT YARDSTICKS of Successful Fund Raising

1. Attainment of FINANCIAL Goals

Your best assurance of a financially successful campaign is to entrust its planning and direction to a company with a record of successful fund raising for Catholic parishes and dioceses. Our exclusively Catholic fund raising record shows millions of dollars secured for our clients, with an average of 90.8% of subscribed amounts actually collected.

2. Attainment of SPIRITUAL Goals

Your fund raising activities must be conducted at a level that will create greater harmony among parishioners, greater co-operation in Church affairs, and greater Church Unity. Here, again, we are pleased to display our record of achievement of the intangibles through our insistence on standards in keeping with the dignity of Holy Mother Church.

Our Distinctively Different Methods of Fund Raising Are Successful by Both of These Measurements

Our techniques, developed through field experience meet successfully the needs of the Catholic Church. We invite you to refer to any Pastor for whom we have conducted campaigns. The records of all our campaigns are available for your information.

WRITE OF TELEPHONE COLLECT TO ANY OF OUR OFFICES

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